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Met warns it will take years to clear out rogue officers

Jamie Grierson

The Metropolitan police have warned it will take years to root out rogue officers in London owing to the number of officers who are currently suspended or on restricted duties.

Britain's biggest force revealed that 201 officers were suspended and 860 were on restricted duties, equivalent to the size of the Warwickshire or Wiltshire forces. There are 34,000 officers in the Met.

A soul-searching overhaul of culture and standards, prompted by the crimes of David Carrick and Wayne Couzens, has brought an acceleration in sackings, with 100 dismissals for gross misconduct in the past 12 months, a 66% increase on historical averages, the force said.

Deputy assistant commissioner Stuart Cundy, who has been leading the reforms, warned it would be years before the work was done and a "paradox" in the process meant the harder they worked, the more cases of misconduct and possibly criminality would be uncovered.

"The harder we work, the more effort, the more energy we put into identifying those who shouldn't be in policing, and doing everything we can in the regulations and the law as it stands, the more difficult cases, the more difficult stories, will become public, and rightly so," Cundy said.

"And this isn't something which we can resolve alone as the Met police, and isn't something which we can resolve in one month, six months … this is going to take one, two or more years to root out those who are corrupting policing."

The work to clean up the Met continues at a time when the policing watchdog in England and Wales has warned "public trust in the police is hanging by a thread".

In his most recent annual assessment Andy Cooke, the head of HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services, demanded sweeping new powers to compel police forces to tackle what he described as the worst crisis in law and order in living memory. He said there was a limited opportunity to restore public trust in police before it was irreparably damaged.

Since the conviction of Carrick, a serving officer 2 →



Who crashed the economy? Truss blames the Bank … but not herself

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PHOTOGRAPH: LEON NEAL/GETTY

Brand shows postponed after assault allegations

Harriet Sherwood

The promoters behind the comedian Russell Brand's standup show have pulled his appearances over the next 10 days, while his publisher announced it was "pausing" all future book projects with him after rape and sexual assault allegations against him were published at the weekend.

Brand failed to appear last night for his regular 5pm live show on the video platform Rumble. The comedian and actor used his last appearance on Friday evening to deny the allegations, which 6 →

Build HS2 as promised, north's leaders tell No 10

Gwyn Topham
Ben Quinn

Northern leaders have called on No 10 to honour promises to build the HS2 high-speed rail line, as ministers repeatedly refused to confirm that it would run to Manchester.

Doubts over the future of the multibillion-pound project are growing after the junior transport minister Richard Holden dodged a number of questions in the Commons.

Reports at the weekend said the prime minister, Rishi Sunak, was set on cutting HS2 short after the initial phase to Birmingham.

The Greater Manchester mayor, Andy Burnham, said the reports "beggared belief" after the promises of successive Conservative governments over the past 10 years.

Labour said it was "committed to delivering HS2 in full and maximising its economic benefits", after doubts were raised over its own policy.

The shadow transport secretary, Louise Haigh, said HS2 would provide a slower journey between London and Birmingham than current train services if the project were cut back.

Originally planned as a Y-shaped route between 2 →

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News

Northern leaders call on No 10 to honour promises on HS2



▼ HS2's boss, Mark Thurston, and the transport secretary, Mark Harper, view a new tunnel in 2022
PHOTOGRAPH: JOE GIDDENS/PA

Continued *from page 1*

London and the north, HS2 has been cut back repeatedly amid ballooning costs, with the eastern leg to Leeds scrapped in 2021 and the Manchester leg delayed by a further two years in March.

The upper range of official costs is now put at about £71bn, in 2019 prices, excluding the unspecified northern leg, which could cost £8bn.

However, costs are believed to have risen substantially since then owing to high inflation. Lord Berkeley, a Labour peer and vice-chair of the Oakervee review of HS2 commissioned by Boris Johnson, said the estimated cost of the high-speed rail scheme was now about £180bn.

Haigh said: "Here we are yet again. 13 years of gross mismanagement and chaos coming home to roost. First they slashed Northern Powerhouse Rail, then they binned HS2 to Leeds, then they announced the line would terminate at Old Oak Common for years to come, and now it looks like they are considering cutting the north of England out in its entirety."

Holden, when asked to confirm that the Birmingham to Manchester line had a future, said repeatedly that "spades are in the ground" and attacked Labour's "£140bn uncosted commitments" to build HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail in full.

Burnham, speaking to the Guardian, urged the prime minister to end the uncertainty and consult people in the north. He said no northern leaders had been consulted about changes that apparently had been briefed, including re-announcing a modified east-west line. "I don't consider that to be fair or acceptable to mayors or the public. It's a decade since George Osborne came here and promised us the earth – HS2, HS3, better TransPennine services – and none of that has happened, it's gone backwards. No wonder people are cynical about politics."

Burnham added: "Why does the north of England have to choose between a good east-west line and north-south? London has both.

"If the briefings are to believed … the south-east linking up to the Midlands with high-speed trains, while the north struggles on with Victorian infrastructure, nothing would illustrate the inequality clearer than that."

Holden, standing in for the transport secretary, Mark Harper, and the rail minister, Huw Merriman, came under pressure from his own backbenches, with Tory MPs questioning the logic of the entire project if it does not go to Manchester.

Iain Stewart, a Conservative MP who chairs the transport select committee, referred to reports of plans to potentially end the line early in Old Oak Common in north-west London – instead of terminating in Euston – as part of a cost-cutting exercise.

"If what has been reported is true, it would be an enormous false economy," he said. "Whether you support or oppose in principle, starting from Old Oak Common will not realise the full potential of the project and will have come as an enormous cost to communities."

Robert Syms, another Tory MP and until recently a member of the same committee, said: "The logic of the project is that it does have to go to Manchester and beyond. Otherwise it wasn't worth starting."

The fate of the HS2 network was thrown into doubt last week as Downing Street confirmed discussions about possible spending cuts before the November autumn statement, and refused to confirm the line would go to Manchester.

A senior government source quoted in the Times claimed Sunak had "made up his mind" to scrap the Manchester HS2 link and the line running into Euston, with HS2 stopping at a new Old Oak Common station six miles west.

The reports come six months after ministers announced construction would be paused in places and that high-speed services to Manchester would not start until almost a decade later than originally promised.

HS2 Ltd has spent about £585m on buying up 954 properties and land for the second phase, which is now in doubt.

A Labour frontbencher, Nick Thomas-Symonds, said yesterday evening that the party would build HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail "in full". "That's the clear pledge that we have given," he said.

Pressed by the BBC on what he mean by "in full" and whether this included plans not just to go to Manchester but also to Leeds, he said: "It's both to Manchester and indeed the eastern leg you have referred to."

Burnham, speaking as Manchester launched its Bee Network app before franchised bus services come back under public control, said the city was making "a major change to public transport that we believe will bring massive improvement – but on a national level it's going backwards".

The West Yorkshire mayor, Tracy Brabin, said the government seemed "determined to deliver the fatal blow for HS2 in the north", having already axed the direct line to Leeds. She added: "We are crying out for our fair share of transport investment to help us build a better-connected region – but once again the north is just an afterthought for this government."

Berkeley criticised the public accounts committee and the National Audit Office for accepting Department for Transport cost estimates. He said Sunak would be right to end the line into London at Old Oak Common, which he said could save £12bn. He added that it was "time to start again from scratch" north of Birmingham.

HS2 western leg to Manchester in doubt



Source: DfT

Continued *from page 1*

Met warns it will take years to clear out rogue officers

unmasked as one of the worst serial sex offenders in the UK, 1,600 cases where officers had faced allegations of domestic or sexual violence over the past 10 years but no action was taken have been identified. There are about 450 live investigations into the cases that were reviewed.

The Met also revealed updated figures about disciplinary processes, including:

- 100 officers have been sacked for gross misconduct in the past year, up by 66% on the normal rate.
- 201 officers are suspended, up from 69 in September last year.
- 275 are awaiting a gross misconduct hearing, a significant proportion of which involved alleged violence against women and girls, compared with 136 last year.
- The number of reports from the public and officers of alleged misconduct has doubled.

The force also checked all officers against records on the police national computer, uncovering 11 cases that were subject to further assessment. Five are now gross misconduct investigations.

Details of all Met employees, both civilian staff and police, were also checked against intelligence records on the Police National Database.

Fourteen are under further investigation for potential gross misconduct, with more due to be added. The most serious of all the cases reviewed involved rape allegations, Cundy said.

A separate report is being published on Operation Leven, the name given to the overhaul of the parliamentary and diplomatic protection (PaDP) command.

The reform programme was prompted by both Carrick and Couzens, who was convicted of the kidnap, rape and murder of Sarah Everard while a serving officer, having been part of PaDP command.

Officers in the unit are responsible for protecting the parliamentary estate, including the Palace of Westminster, as well as embassies across the capital. The majority of the officers are armed.

The findings of Operation Leven were provided to Louise Casey, whose damning report on Met standards and culture was published in March.

Deputy assistant commissioner Laurence Taylor said the Operation Leven review found "unhealthy work cultures" within PaDP command arising from a "lack of diversity, poor and minimal loss of supervision, and a sense of disconnect from the Met" with low morale.

"It's very clear that it needed to be better led, the officers need to be better supervised, they need to be better trained and they need to be better equipped," Taylor said.

Among changes being introduced, Taylor said the Met aimed to boost the number of women in the command to 20% and the number of black, Asian and minority ethnic officers to 20%.

'There's definitely pressure - it's Vogue'

Nnadi takes over at fashion's bible as Enninful departs



Edward Enninful, Anna Wintour of US Vogue and the director Baz Luhrmann at the Vogue World event
PHOTOGRAPH: WWD/GETTY



London-born Nnadi worked at Trace and the Fader as well as the Evening Standard before joining US Vogue in 2010
PHOTOGRAPH: EVELYN FREJA/THE GUARDIAN

> *'It's important to think about who is telling the story, and whose story we are telling'*
>
> **Chioma Nnadi**
> *Incoming British Vogue editor*

Morwenna Ferrier

By the time London fashion week had begun last weekend, it was already the industry's worst-kept secret.

But after months of conjecture surrounding who would replace Edward Enninful, the 51-year-old outgoing editor of British Vogue, Condé Nast has told the Guardian that the London-born journalist Chioma Nnadi will take over the role on 9 October.

Once in post, Nnadi, currently editor of the US edition's website, will be known as the head of editorial content, rather than editor-in-chief. She will also become the first black woman to edit the storied fashion magazine.

"Is there pressure? Yeah, there's definitely pressure - it's Vogue," Nnadi said, speaking from her home in New York.

"It still means something to be in Vogue, it still has authority. [And there's pressure] because of Edward. He broke new ground. It's more than being part of a magazine - it's part of the cultural conversation."

The announcement followed a weekend of fashion shows that were partly eclipsed by Vogue World, the arts and fashion event termed "Anna Wintour's flex" by those attending. Nnadi remained in New York so as not to stoke rumours.

The new job title is not insignificant. Nnadi said her focus will be on "digital storytelling" and keeping Vogue "interactive" with readers - but it is also part of a shift that has seen the starry editors of Vogue's European editions, who once filled the front rows, replaced by global heads after Condé Nast's 2020 company-wide restructuring.

Nnadi is likely to work alongside Wintour, who has described her as a "beloved colleague" who will focus on "music and culture" as much as fashion. For her part, Nnadi has credited Wintour with "bringing Vogue into the future".

Speaking after Vogue World, she added: "Working under Anna, you get a sense of what's going to be next. I haven't checked my email but she's probably on to the next thing already."

Born to a Swiss-German nurse mother and a Nigerian father who came to the UK to study in the 1960s, Nnadi grew up in central London, working at indie magazines such as Trace and the Fader, with which she credits her "scrappy" nature, before a stint at the Evening Standard.



Enninful's first cover, from 2017, showed his aim of boosting diversity

In 2010, she moved to New York to work for Vogue. As well as running the US site, she co-hosts the podcast The Run-Through, and is one of the magazine's star writers, the embodiment of Wintour's mantra: "All platforms - all the time".

Nnadi said she expected comparisons to be made between her and Enninful, but offered an assessment of their differences: "As a black woman, but also as a biracial woman, how I view the world is also how I see it - through a lens that is influenced by my background, by where I live, and by having parents from different cultures and having to move between these cultures.

"Things have changed a lot. When I started out, there was one other black person working in the building, and we both went to the same college. It wasn't the same place it is now. Obviously matters of diversity and inclusion should always be on the agenda, but it feels like more of an open conversation now, and that feels to me like progress," she said.

Nnadi is an editor and writer, while Enninful came through styling. She said she recognised Vogue was first and foremost a fashion magazine, but "the impulse is the same, regardless of whether you style or write. Edward had that instinct, even though his background is different to mine. But the question will always be: how do we capture the zeitgeist? It's important to think about who is telling the story, and whose story we are telling."

Enninful announced he would be leaving Vogue after the March 2024 issue. His departure came as a shock after a successful but brief six-year tenure as both its first male and first black editor, during which he was praised for featuring people of all skin colours, body shapes and backgrounds. He plans to stay on at Condé Nast in an advisory role.

Nnadi is well versed in the criticism levelled against the magazine, particularly regarding the cost of the clothes it features. "When I started at Vogue it was about having the latest new thing," she said. "Now, there's a sense of archival fashion being just as important. I grew up going to Portobello Road every single weekend looking for vintage clothing. That was before it was super-cool to do it." Will this devil wear vintage? "I always stop by Rellik when I'm in London, and go down Ladbroke Grove on a Friday, so most of my wardrobe now is resale and vintage," she said. "Of course, as I progressed I was able to afford new things too." One of her most prized possessions, though, is an Edwardian dress.

Nnadi said she was still house-hunting in London, and would stay with family until she found somewhere. Despite being abroad for more than a decade, she said she is still a Londoner at heart, although having discovered her friends had moved to east London, she admitted: "The axis of cool has definitely changed since I was here. It's a homecoming, but clearly a moment to learn too."

Thousands spent by mystery backers to discredit Ulez – Khan

Dan Sabbagh

Sadiq Khan is to say "hundreds of thousands of dollars" were spent on a manipulation campaign targeting London's ultra-low emission zone (Ulez) on Twitter, citing research conducted after Labour's unexpected Uxbridge byelection defeat.

The London mayor, who will speak at a conference in New York today, said he feared disinformation and manipulation campaigns were "spreading apace", but it was not always clear who was behind them.

According to remarks released before his speech, Khan will tell social media companies: "You do not need to wait to be led. You wield incredible power. It's long overdue you meet your responsibilities and bear down on the attempts to distort truth."

The mayor said there was evidence that "hundreds of thousands of dollars were spent on the anti-Ulez online manipulation campaign on Twitter alone" but "we have no idea who was behind the campaign".

Research by the social media analysts Valent in July concluded there was evidence of "an extensive online campaign targeted to undermine support for the ultra-low emission zone" before the byelection in Boris Johnson's former parliamentary seat.

It found 48% of the accounts on Twitter, which has been rebranded as X, that mentioned Ulez had been created after November 2022, and of those about 90% "exhibited signs of inauthenticity", using generic names and with high proportion of fake followers.

These accounts – called spreaders – were primarily engaged in retweeting anti-Ulez opinions from real people or groups opposed to expansion of the area covered by the £12.50 daily charge for older vehicles in August.

Valent said it only looked at anti-Ulez accounts on the social media platform, but it believed the campaign had cost at least £168,000.

Labour failed to win the seat of Uxbridge in July by 495 votes despite big swings against the Conservatives in two other English seats the same day. The party's defeat was blamed on the unpopularity of the Ulez expansion to outer London, prompting recriminations within Labour.

Khan accepts there are "genuine concerns about the impact of Ulez expansion", but he believes it is possible those concerns may have been amplified by social media manipulation, and the technique may be applied in future.

"The anti-Ulez misinformation assault was a precursor for a much larger attack on future climate and environmental policies," the mayor is expected to tell the Strong Cities Network at Columbia University in New York.

In February, the Guardian reported that a team of Israeli contractors sells a software package called Advanced Impact Media Solutions that can control more than 30,000 fake social media profiles, and can be used to spread disinformation at speed.

John Healey, the shadow defence secretary, will also warn on a trip to Washington that the US and UK should be on "high alert" for election interference from Moscow and elsewhere as both countries prepare to go to the polls in the next 16 months.

▼ *A walker in Hyde Park, London, shelters from the sun under an umbrella during a heatwave in the capital during the summer of 2022*



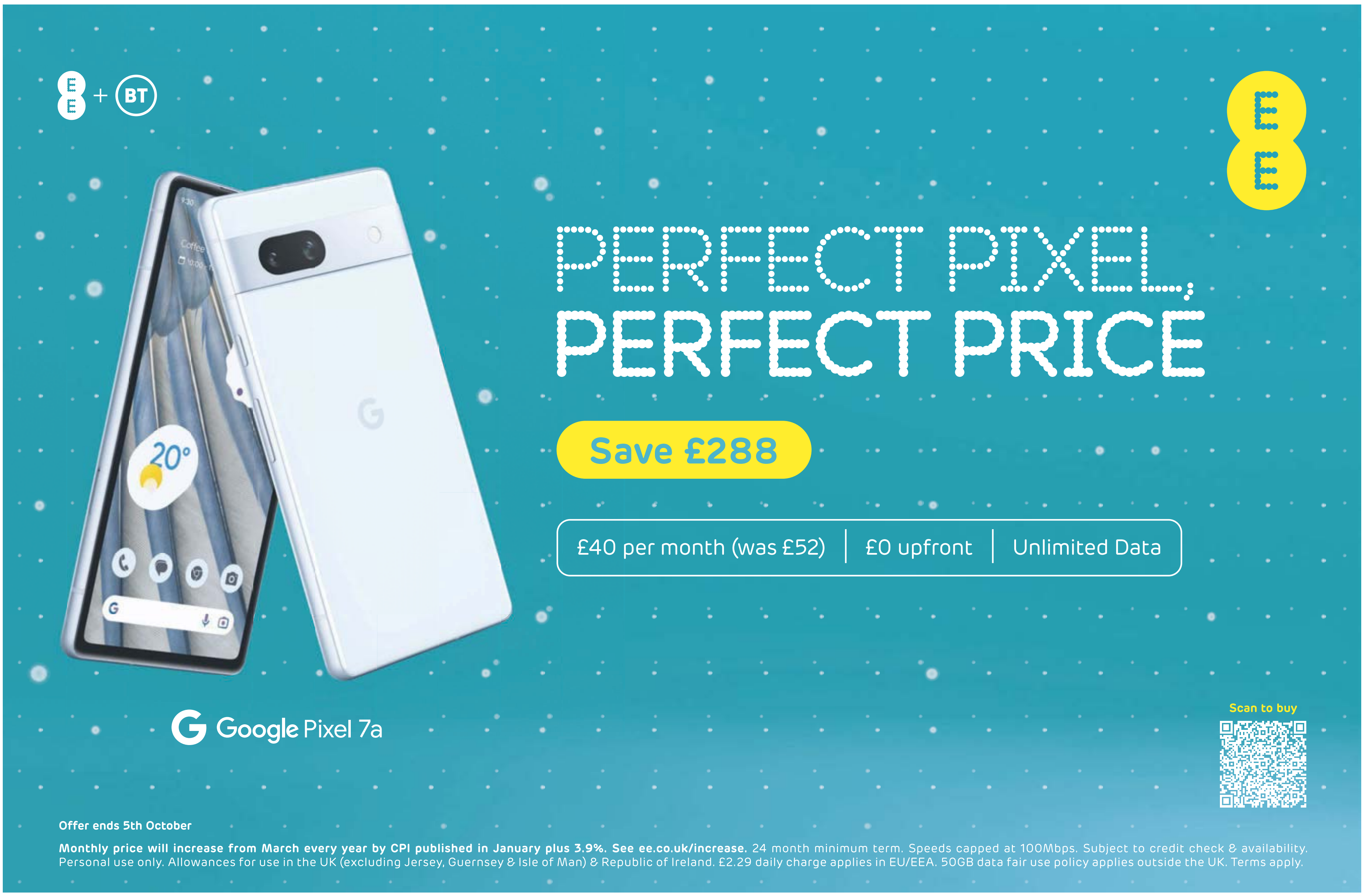
'London must prepare for 45C heat'

London faces the "incredibly worrying" prospect of enduring days when temperatures hit 45C (113F) owing to the climate crisis, Sadiq Khan told the Guardian at a climate summit in New York.

Khan said an interim climate resilience report had found the capital could experience 45C days "in the foreseeable future", potentially affecting various basic functions of the city.

"It means the underground is not fit for purpose, some homes are too hot in the daytime – care homes and schools too," Khan said. "It means we have to adapt for those temperatures now. It's time for those who are delaying action to wake up and smell the coffee."

Khan said more government support was needed to help cities adapt to the climate crisis. "We have to throw everything at this. We've had very little support … The fact the prime minister isn't coming to the UN general assembly and may not go to Cop28 speaks volumes." Oliver Milman *New York*



Shattered dreams
Costs force young to ditch their ambitions
Page 11

Tea and trenchcoats
Burberry wraps up London fashion week
Page 19



National



Seabird's eye view Mousehole Harbour from Above, by Richard Thomas, is the winner of the coastal views category in this year's Ultimate Sea View photography competition run by the Shipwrecked Mariners' Society, which since 1839 has assisted fishers and sailors struggling with hardship. The village of Mousehole is on the south coast of Cornwall, near Penzance.

PHOTOGRAPH: RICHARD THOMAS

Each victim of Post Office IT scandal to receive £600,000

Mark Sweney

Every post office operator whose conviction over the Horizon IT scandal was overturned will receive £600,000 in compensation from the government, ministers said yesterday.

The Horizon scandal, described as the most widespread miscarriage of justice in UK history, resulted in more than 700 post office operators being prosecuted between 1999 and 2015 for theft and false accounting because of faulty software installed in the late 1990s.

To date 86 workers have had their convictions overturned and £21m has been paid in compensation. "This is about righting a wrong and providing some form of relief to those wrongfully caught up in this scandal," said Kevin Hollinrake, the business department minister with responsibility for the Post Office. The government said the new compensation offer was in addition to paying for all reasonable legal fees. Any post office operator who does not want to accept it can continue with the existing legal process.

Any post office operator who has already received initial compensation payments, or reached a settlement with the Post Office of less than £600,000, will be paid the difference.

"Too many postmasters have suffered and for too long, which is why the government remains committed to seeing this through to the end until it is resolved and ensuring this cannot ever happen again," Hollinrake said.

The accounting software, installed by the Post Office and supplied by Fujitsu, resulted in postal operators filing shortfalls in their returns, for which the Post Office sued them. Some spent time in prison, and the scandal has been linked to four suicides. It is the subject of an inquiry led by the retired high court judge Sir Wyn Williams, which is expected to be completed some time next year.

The government announced interim payments of £100,000 in 2021, which were later raised to £163,000. Hollinrake, who was appointed as Post Office minister in October, said raising the limit to £600,000 meant the government had "erred on the side of generosity"



▲ *To date 86 convictions related to Horizon have been overturned*

but that could not make up for the impact the scandal had had on many lives. "If you've suffered, if you've spent time in jail, if you've lost your house, if your marriage has failed … if those things have happened to you, no amount of money will ever be enough," he said.

The overturned convictions process is one of three compensation schemes to have been set up as the scandal has developed. The government said the three schemes had paid more than £120m to 2,600 individuals affected by the scandal. As the owner of the Post Office, the government is responsible for funding compensation payments.

Last month, Nick Read, the chief executive of the Post Office, said he would return a bonus of £54,400 linked to the inquiry into the Horizon scandal. He apologised for the "procedural and governance mistakes" made by the Post Office that had linked significant bonus payments to work carried out in relation to the inquiry.

After the scandal, it emerged that about £1.6m in bonus payments had been made to executives. The progress of the Horizon inquiry was one of four metrics on which bonus payments were awarded.

First young adults able to identify sperm or egg donor this autumn

PA Media

Dozens of young adults born via sperm or egg donation will be able to find out their biological origins in the coming weeks, with the first just days away from being able to apply to find out more information about their donor, health officials have said.

Changes to the donor anonymity law will mean that most donor-conceived young adults born after a certain date will be able to track down the people whose donations led to their conception.

The first people will become eligible to apply to the UK fertility regulator, the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA), for this information in October.

The regulator said about 30 donor-conceived 18-year-olds would become eligible to find their donor between October and December.

The changes will make it possible for most people conceived from egg, sperm or embryo donations made after 1 April 2005 to be able to request identifiable information after they turn 18. This includes their donor's full name, date of birth and last known address.

Data from the HFEA shows that by the end of 2024 more than 700 donor-conceived people will be able to request identifying information about their donor, should they wish.

And by 2030, 11,427 young people will be able to request identifying information about their donor.

The HFEA has launched a new campaign - Who is My Donor - to raise awareness of the change and encourage donors to ensure their data is up to date with their clinic as the first young adults apply for information.

"An egg or sperm donation made 18 years ago could rightly feel like a distant memory for some, and forgetting to update contact details is easily done. However, giving the correct information to the donor-conceived person and notifying the donor an application has been made, can help facilitate successful communication and may reduce any emotional impact," said Rachel Cutting of the HFEA.

"One quick email or phone call by a donor to the clinic where they donated, or to the HFEA, can make a huge difference to a donor-conceived person's life.

"We hope the WhoIsMyDonor campaign removes barriers to contact, and ensures all those affected by donor conception have the best possible outcome."

Brand's live shows pulled as book publishers put projects on hold

Continued from page 1

followed a joint investigation by the Sunday Times, the Times and Channel 4's Dispatches programme.

He was due to perform his Bipolarisation show at the Theatre Royal Windsor today, the Plymouth Pavilions on Friday and the Halls Wolverhampton next Thursday.

The promoters said yesterday afternoon: "We are postponing these few remaining addiction charity fundraiser shows. We don't like doing it - but we know you'll understand."

Their statement came after the venues were locked in talks most of the day over what to do about the Brand show following the accusations against him.

Bluebird, Brand's publishers, said in a statement: "These are very serious allegations and in the light of them, Bluebird has taken the decision to pause all future publishing with Russell Brand."

Bluebird, an imprint of Pan Macmillan, has published Brand's titles including Recovery: Freedom from Our Addictions and Mentors: How to Help and Be Helped in recent years.

A new book by Brand, Recovery: The Workbook, was due to be published by Bluebird in December 2025, according to the company's website.

Bipolarisation was sold out in Windsor. The theatre removed mention of the show from its website yesterday after the promoters' statement. The show was also sold out in Plymouth, although tickets were still available in Wolverhampton.

The promoters and the venues now face having to refund ticketholders. The Theatre Royal Windsor said it "will be offering ticket refunds in line with our terms & conditions of sale".

Earlier, Luke Pollard, a Plymouth MP, had suggested that the show should be ditched. He posted on X (formerly Twitter): "In any other job after serious allegations of rape and sexual assault where the alleged perpetrator still has access to women, they would be suspended pending investigation. This is the equivalent of cancelling or postponing shows."

> *'In any other job after serious allegations of rape and sexual assault where the alleged perpetrator still has access to women, they would be suspended pending investigation'*
>
> **Luke Pollard**
> *Plymouth MP*

Brand did appear on stage in Bipolarisation at Wembley Park theatre in London on Saturday. It was his first public appearance after news of the sexual assault allegations had broken. About 2,000 people attended the show, which began an hour after the scheduled start time.

The crowd was told Brand was delayed by traffic. According to a BBC reporter present, a woman in the crowd held a large piece of paper saying: "We stand by you."

Brand appeared distracted and his fans could be heard expressing hatred of the mainstream media, the BBC report said. He told the audience: "I really appreciate your support, I love you, I want to do a fantastic show for you. I've got a lot of things to talk to you about. There are obviously some things that I absolutely cannot talk about and I appreciate that you will understand."

Bipolarisation was billed as: "Rules and rule breaking! Democracy and freedom!" Brand has achieved a large following by promoting conspiracy theories and attacking the media.

Last year the comedian Katherine Ryan told Louis Theroux that it was an "open secret" within the comedy industry that a prominent performer was facing allegations of sexual assault. She declined to name the comedian at the time, citing a "litigious minefield because lots of people have tried to nail this person down for their alleged crimes and this person has very good lawyers".

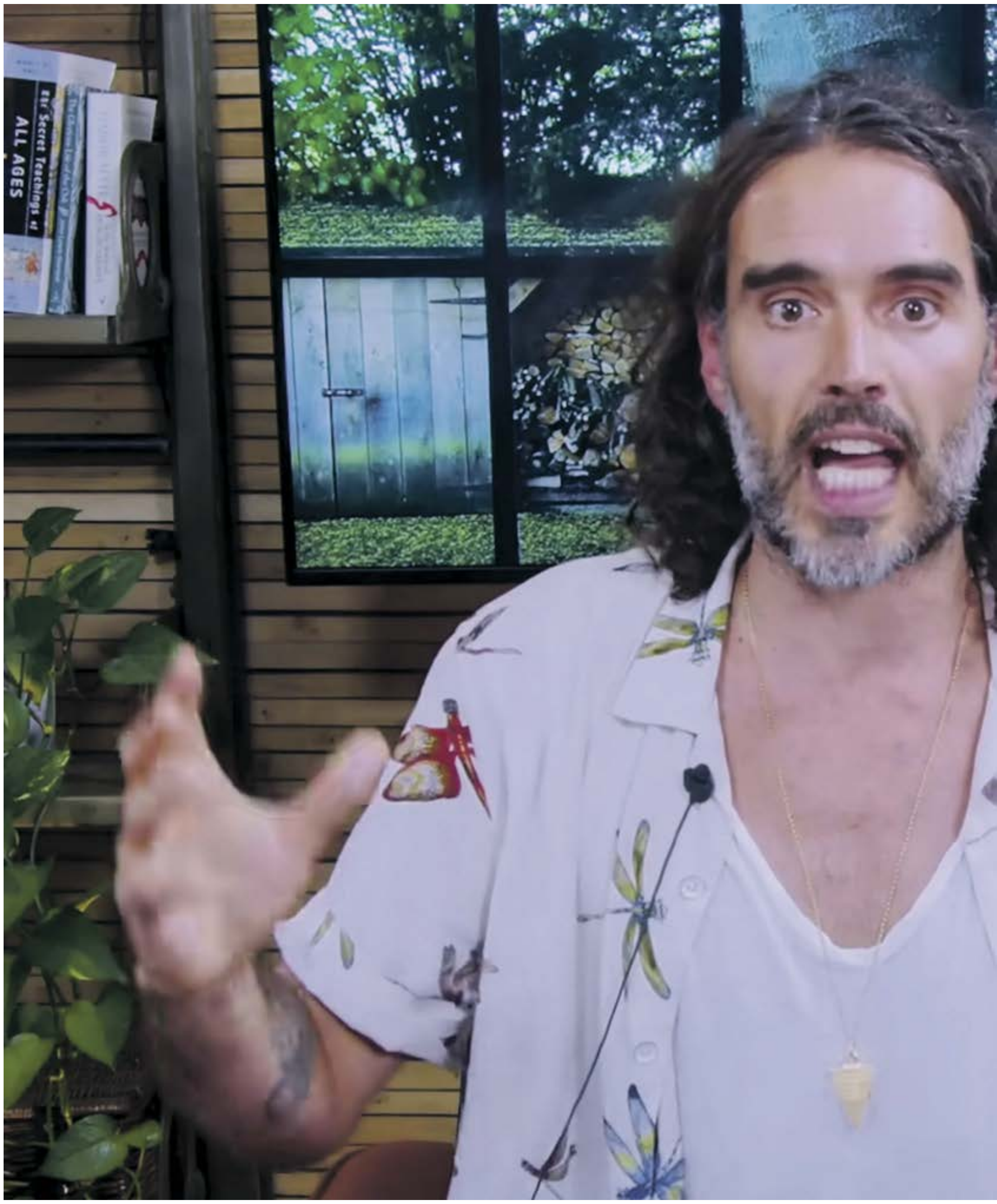
However, she told Theroux that she had repeatedly criticised the comedian to his face while working on a show together.

"I, in front of loads of people, in the format of the show said to this person's face that they are a predator, again and again," she said, only for those comments to be edited from the final broadcast. The programme is believed to be the 2018 series of Comedy Central's Roast Battle, which featured Ryan and Brand as judges.

Deadline, which first reported the link, claimed that Brand was deeply uncomfortable and asked producers to protect him from being criticised by his fellow comedians.

All clips from the show featuring Brand have now been removed from Comedy Central's YouTube channel, while Channel 4 has also removed shows featuring Brand from its streaming services.

Ryan has yet to comment on the Brand allegations.



'Awakened wonders' Smaller, loyal audience can still prove lucrative

Hibaq Farah
Jim Waterson

During the 2000s Russell Brand was ubiquitous in the British media, adopting a scattergun approach that saw him host his own Radio 2 show, present Big Brother spin-offs, work the chatshow circuit, tour his live comedy act, present documentaries, write a bestselling autobiography and even write football blogs for the Guardian - before heading off to Hollywood to briefly achieve global fame.

Nowadays the comedian has a much smaller but still profitable media empire of his own, built on a set of online platforms that barely existed when he was at the peak of his fame. As a result he retains direct access to his loyal audience, unlike in a previous era where he could be taken off air by an employer pending an investigation into allegations of sexual assault and rape - which Brand has denied.

Core to Brand's media operation is his YouTube channel, which has undergone a number of reinventions since the then-Labour leader, Ed Miliband, made a late-night dash to appear on Brand's channel in a desperate attempt to win over youth voters during the 2015 general election.

His YouTube output now ploughs a vaccine-sceptic and Trumpian furrow, seemingly aimed at a rightwing audience in the US, where interviews with the former Fox News host Tucker Carlson sit alongside grabby headlines such as "So, Trump Just Said THIS About Vaccines And It Changes EVERYTHING".

Sara McCorquodale, the chief executive of the social media analysis agency Corq, said Brand's YouTube channel would be making a healthy sum for the comedian and self-styled wellness guru, based on an influencer marketing calculator. "He is most likely making £2,000 to £4,000 per video, not taking into account any affiliate deals and brand sponsorships that might be running in the background," she said. Based on five videos a week, this could easily produce the best part of a £1m a year.

Although Brand often begins his YouTube videos by addressing his "6.5 million awakened wonders" who subscribe to his channel, the actual audience for his individual videos tends to be between 500,000 and 1 million viewers - a



healthy number by any measure but he is far from one of the biggest names on YouTube.

McCorquodale said Brand's output seemed to be based on earning money through programmatic advertising and directly from viewers, rather than signing the endorsement deals used by other influencers. This means leaning into YouTube's algorithm in order to keep view counts up and working out what is likely to drive the most clicks. "He's found out his audience like post-Trump, QAnon, 'everyone's against us' content," McCorquodale said. "That's what drives the most views. This route means he is making most of his money through content and not brand deals - you have to figure out what drives most views so you can drive most revenue."

However, she said the risk was that YouTube could choose to take away his ability to earn money. The Google-owned website did not respond to a request for comment, but has rules against real-life behaviour "that harms our users, community, employees or ecosystem", although the bar for applying these can be relatively high. As a result, McCorquodale said she would not be surprised if Brand launched some kind of exclusive paid-for content in the aftermath of the Sunday Times investigation, capitalising on the idea that he is under further attack from the mainstream media. Another option for Brand is increasing reliance on Rumble - a platform that positions itself as a conservative-friendly version of YouTube - where Brand already posts daily videos filmed at his Oxfordshire home.

Luminary, the subscription podcast company, produces the interview show Under the Skin with Russell Brand. Luminary did not respond to requests for comment yesterday on whether it still had a business relationship with Brand, although the comedian's website is now pointing to a new self-produced podcast called Stay Free with Russell Brand. True believers can sign up to be one of his "awakened wonders" for a minimum of $60 (£48) a year to receive exclusive content and guided meditations and to go on walks with Brand. All of this appears to be successfully generating money for Brand, whose personal company - Pablo Diablo's Legitimate Business Firm Ltd, co-owned with his wife - saw its cash reserves grow by £2m in the last financial year.

As a result, even though Brand may not be the household name he used to be, he can retain a substantial degree of influence - and earnings - from targeting a smaller number of devoted people.

Kat Molesworth, a brand campaign consultant, said the allegations may only strengthen Brand's bond with his fans: "Strong parasocial relationships and the increase in time being spent online means that people are less willing to give up their relationships with these creators, and so they will find reasons to excuse what's happened to defend that person because they feel emotionally attached to them."

But being a content creator can be hard work, with the requirement to regularly upload fresh content, which Brand usually fulfils by producing a new daily video every afternoon at 5pm. Yesterday, after the sexual assault allegations had been aired by the Sunday Times and Channel 4, no video appeared - leaving his subscribers waiting to hear his side of the story.

▲ Russell Brand appears on his YouTube channel to deny allegations made against him by the Sunday Times and Channel 4. Below, onstage for Give It Up for Comic Relief at Wembley Arena in March 2013, when he was still appearing regularly in the mainstream media

PHOTOGRAPHS: YOUTUBE; DAVE J HOGAN/GETTY



Police
Met receives assault claim from 2003

Kevin Rawlinson
Jamie Grierson
Ben Quinn

Police have received a report of an alleged sexual assault in the wake of media reporting of allegations against Russell Brand, Scotland Yard has said.

The 48-year-old comedian and actor has been accused of rape, assault and emotional abuse between 2006 and 2013, when he was at the height of his fame working for the BBC, Channel 4 and starring in Hollywood films. He denies the allegations.

The Metropolitan police yesterday said it had received an allegation of sexual assault in Soho, central London, in 2003. It said that as yet no investigation had been launched.

This appears to be a new allegation against Brand, as the claims reported by Channel 4, the Times and the Sunday Times were based on accounts relating to incidents said to have taken place between 2006 and 2013.

A Met spokesperson said: "We are aware of reporting by the Sunday Times and Channel 4's Dispatches about allegations of sexual offences. On Sunday 17 September, the Met received a report of a sexual assault, which was alleged to have taken place in Soho in central London in 2003. Officers are in contact with the woman and will be providing her with support.

"We first spoke with the Sunday Times on Saturday 16 September and have since made further approaches to the Sunday Times and Channel 4 to ensure that anyone who believes they have been the victim of a sexual offence is aware of how to report this to the police.

"We continue to encourage anyone who believes they may have been a victim of a sexual offence, no matter how long ago it was, to contact us."

The allegations in the Times, the Sunday Times and Dispatches include claims Brand assaulted one of the women when she was a 16-year-old schoolgirl, and another woman has claimed that he raped her against a wall in his home in Los Angeles. The Sunday Times published texts to her - from a phone number that it said multiple sources verified as belonging to Brand - in which he said: "I'm sorry. That was crazy and selfish."

A third woman says she was assaulted in the same house the following year after working with Brand on a project.

Before the first allegations were published, Brand posted a video online on Friday saying he had been "promiscuous" but that all of his relationships had been consensual.

The BBC, Channel 4 and Banijay UK, which bought Endemol - the company commissioned by Channel 4 to produce the Big Brother spin-off shows Brand hosted - have all launched investigations into his behaviour while he was working on their programmes.

Accuser
Response to allegations is 'insulting'

Kevin Rawlinson

Russell Brand's response to allegations of rape, sexual assault and emotional abuse has been "insulting", one of his accusers has said, as she claimed he sent a BBC car to bring her to him from the gates of her school when she was 16.

Alice, who spoke under a pseudonym, has told the Sunday Times that Brand started a relationship with her when she was a teenage schoolgirl and he was a 31-year-old man with fame and influence.

Since he was informed by reporters that those allegations - and others made by several women - were to become public, Brand has denied them and sought to portray them as part of a mainstream media attack on him. He has cast himself as an outsider and a threat to media interests in a video on his YouTube channel.

Hours after the reports emerged on Saturday, he appeared onstage for a scheduled performance at the Troubadour theatre in London, thanking his audience for their applause and telling them: "There's some things I cannot talk about and hopefully you appreciate that. I'm going to give you everything I've got."

"It's insulting," Alice told BBC Radio 4's Woman's Hour yesterday. "And it's laughable that he would even imply that this is some kind of mainstream media conspiracy. He's not outside the mainstream. He did a Universal Pictures movie last year - he did Minions, a children's movie.

"He is very much part of the mainstream media, he just happens to have a YouTube channel where he talks about conspiracy theories to an audience that laps it up. And it may sound cynical, but I do think that he was building himself an audience for years of people that would then have great distrust of any publication that came forward with allegations. He knew it was coming for a long time.

"And then, as for him denying that anything non-consensual happened, that's not a surprise to me. These men always deny any of the allegations brought to them - I knew he would. What he didn't deny was that he had a relationship with a 16-year-old."

Alice added that Brand would send a car to collect her from school. She said he had two accounts that she knew of - one with the BBC, and one independent of his work for the broadcaster. She said she recognised the difference between the two and could, therefore, be confident one of those sent was provided by the BBC.

A BBC spokesperson said: "Russell Brand worked on BBC radio programmes between 2006 and 2008 and we are urgently looking into the issues raised."

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‘Hostile takeover’: Sheffield music fans protest over future of Leadmill venue

Hannah Moore

People in Sheffield protested yesterday against what they call a “hostile takeover” of one of the city’s most storied music venues.

About 100 people gathered outside Sheffield town hall on the first day of a licensing hearing to decide the future of the Leadmill, which helped launch the careers of Pulp, the Arctic Monkeys and Self Esteem, among others.

The hearing will decide whether MVL Properties should be granted a shadow licence to take over from Phil Mills, whose lease ended in March. The director of MVL Properties is Dominic Madden, whose Electric Group owns the venue, as well as Electric Brixton and clubs in Newcastle and Bristol.

Mills and his staff have led an impassioned campaign to “save the Leadmill” - backed by celebrities including Eddie Izzard, and the bands Blossoms and Kaiser Chiefs - claiming Madden seeks to “exterminate” the venue, which opened in 1980.

The campaign has been marred by controversy, with reports that it had offered to pay people £40 to turn up at the protest, an offer organisers said was to “ensure the rally is professionally and safely managed”.

Protesters accused Madden of being a “vulture capitalist” and said his takeover would destroy the unique community spirit of the building. “Sheffield really prides itself on its independent music venues,” said Josh Chaim, 27.

“If they came and took it over and it became part of a chain, the money wouldn’t stay in Sheffield. All the profits would just go down to London. Everybody knows that. Everybody knows it’s all about money.”





▲ *Def Leppard performing a benefit concert for the Music Venue Trust at the Leadmill, left, in May*

PHOTOGRAPHS: DANNY LAWSON/PA



Pulp unveil a plaque in 2015 to mark their first Leadmill gig in 1980

Madden, who bought the freehold in 2017, said he intended to continue running the Leadmill as a music venue, and to “retain its unique handwriting”, under the new name Electric Sheffield.

He said he had tried to work with Mills to resolve issues with the venue, but that the leaseholder has repeatedly refused to respond to his letters. Mills was served with an eviction notice in March 2022.

“There is an arrogance that sits behind this application,” said Sarah Clover, the barrister representing Mills, at yesterday’s hearing.

She claimed Madden was seeking to use his wealth and celebrity connections, developed over 25 years of running music and arts venues, to push through an application she characterised as “unsafe”.

Numerous safety concerns had been raised about other venues operated by Electric Group, she said, pointing to newspaper reports of cannabis possession, and of a stabbing outside SWX in Bristol.

Twelve members of the public who made submissions in support of the Leadmill at the hearing also invoked safety concerns. Dominic Heslop, a Sheffield-based artist who runs the youth poetry programme Slambarz, said the Leadmill was a safe space for young people from “precarious backgrounds” and questioned whether that could continue should Madden be granted the licence.

Martin Pickles, the property manager of Scotia Works, an office space adjacent to the Leadmill whose users include survivors of domestic abuse, said Electric Group had “made no attempt to communicate with us as a local community”, and that he did not have confidence, given the concerns raised by Clover, that the safety of local people would be ensured under Electric Group.

Madden said he respected the passion of local residents but suggested they had been misled. He said several of the safety issues raised had happened before he took over the three venues. “None of my premises have been subject to review … we have an outstanding track record of compliance,” he added.

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End of salt-reduction drive 'led to thousands of deaths'

Denis Campbell
Health policy editor

Thousands of people died avoidably after the government stopped telling the food industry to cut how much salt it puts into its products, new research has found.

Salt is a major cause of high blood pressure, which leads to tens of thousand of people a year suffering or dying from a heart attack or stroke.

The average amount of salt people in England consumed fell by almost 20% after the Food Standards Agency initiated a programme in 2006 which led to manufacturers reducing the salt content of processed foods. However, the coalition government abandoned it in 2011. Its "public health responsibility deal" let producers set their own levels again.

Average intake then rose again, from 7.58 grams a day in 2014 to 8.39 grams a day in 2018, according to the study, which has been published in the Journal of Hypertension. It has "stalled" since. Experts recommend that people should consume no more than 6g a day to stay healthy.

Abandoning the targets also led to a levelling-off of both population-wide blood pressure levels and the rate of deaths from heart attacks and strokes, both of which had fallen, the study said.

Researchers led by Jing Song from Queen Mary University of London (QMUL) said if the initiative had continued, average intake would have fallen by a further 1.45g a day between 2014 and 2018, preventing 38,000 deaths, 24,000 of which would have been premature.

The Department of Health and Social Care was approached for comment.


Experts say not to consume more than 6g of salt a day



Daring or delusional?

Starmer tests appetite for new EU trade pact

Kiran Stacey
Lisa O'Carroll
Pippa Crerar

Keir Starmer is to meet Emmanuel Macron as he begins to prepare the ground for a potential renegotiation of the UK-EU trading agreement in 2025.

The Labour leader will meet the French president at the Élysée Palace in Paris today on the latest leg of an international tour that has included The Hague and Montreal.

Labour hopes to use the trip to France to position Starmer as a leader on the international stage, as well as to test the appetite for a broader trading arrangement should the party win the general election next year.

Many in UK and EU foreign policy circles warn however that if Labour does win the next election, the party is unlikely to find a receptive audience in European capitals for such a renegotiation unless it is willing to offer significant concessions.

Joël Reland, a research associate at the thinktank UK in a Changing Europe, said: "The EU is only interested in a very narrow technical exercise looking at how the TCA [trade and cooperation agreement] is being implemented. If the UK wants to change that it will have to offer quite strong incentives."

The political commentator Wolfgang Münchau wrote yesterday: "Starmer's attempt to re-write the relationship is based on a delusion … that it is possible to stay outside the single market and the customs union, and get a better deal. This is a political lie."

Starmer and his shadow ministers have begun setting out in detail which elements of the agreement they would like to change. Speaking to the BBC yesterday, Nick Thomas-Symonds, the shadow trade secretary, said his party wanted to achieve greater cooperation on agricultural standards, crime and security. Labour also wants to make it easier for young people and artists to travel between the UK and EU, and to have each side recognise each other's professional qualifications and kite marks. "We are looking at every single aspect in terms of our own national interest, that is what comes first," he said .

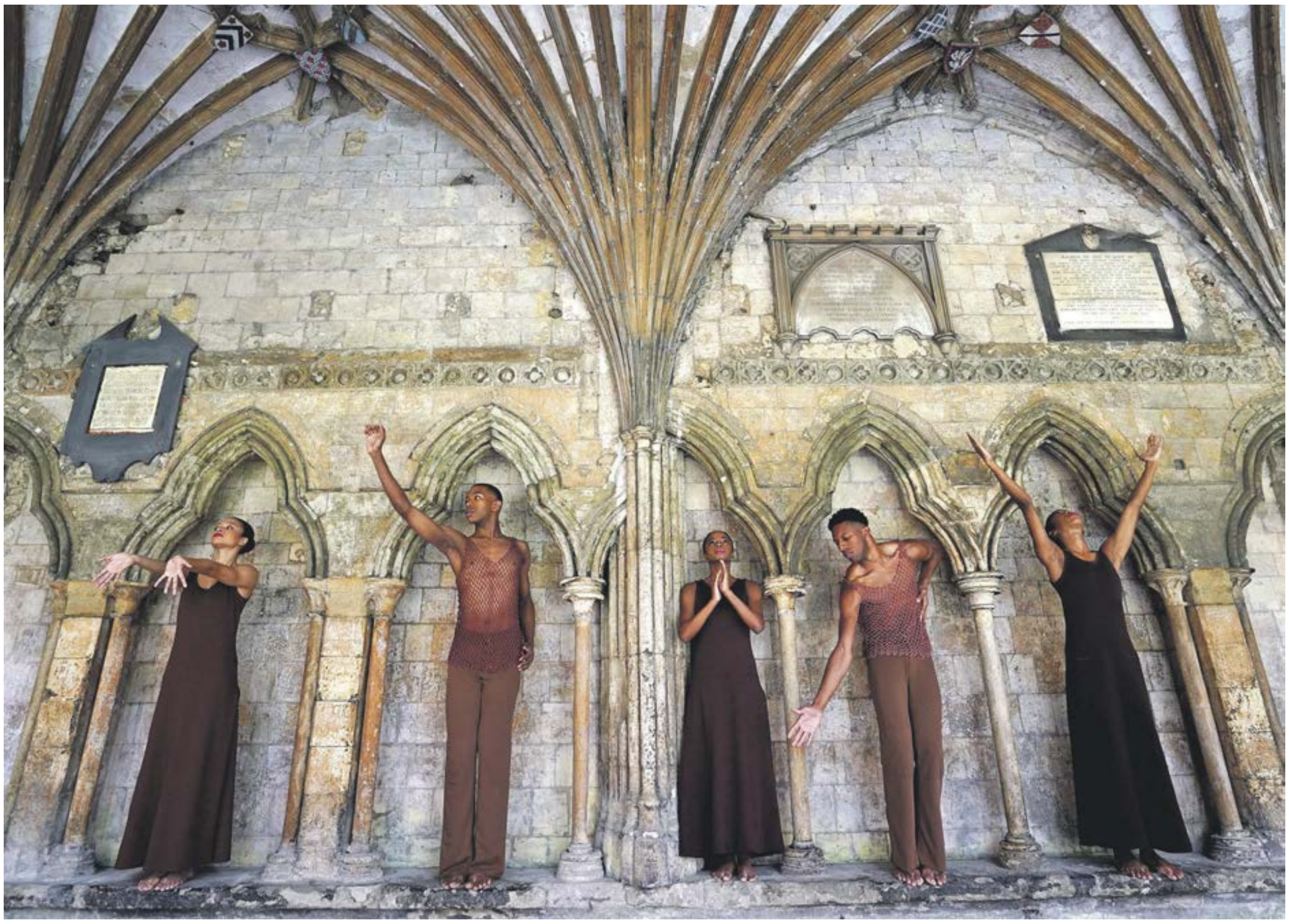
> ***'We are looking at every aspect in terms of national interest'***
>
> **Nick Thomas-Symonds**
> *Shadow trade secretary*

On agricultural standards, Labour wants a new veterinary agreement that would remove the need to check swathes of food and agricultural goods at the port. To do so however could require the UK to sign up to EU standards on those goods, and in the words of one European official, "will take years and be a painful negotiation".

A defence and security pact, which has been promoted by the shadow foreign secretary, David Lammy, is also likely to require substantial negotiations. Experts say the UK would at least have a strong hand in any such talks, given EU leaders are keen to gain access to British intelligence and military equipment.

Some in Labour fear the party has misunderstood the purpose of the planned review. Earlier this year, Maroš Šefčovič, the vice-president of the European Commission, warned: "[The review] does not constitute a commitment to reopen the TCA or to renegotiate the supplementary agreements."

Despite the doubts, Starmer is pressing ahead with his European charm offensive, conscious that a broader renegotiation with Brussels may be a project for the longer term. "I've got a 15-year-old boy and a 12-year-old girl," the Labour leader told the Financial Times. "I'm not going to let them grow up in a world where all I've got to say to them about their future is: 'It's going to be worse than it might otherwise have been.'"



Mysterious moves
Dancers from the Ailey II company at Canterbury Cathedral cloisters, performing a preview of Revelations. The troupe is at the city's Marlowe theatre tonight and tomorrow, and touring the UK until 28 October.

PHOTOGRAPH: GARETH FULLER/PA

Young people giving up on their dreams amid cost of living crisis

Amelia Hill

Young people are abandoning their dreams and ambitions because of the cost of living crisis and mental health concerns, new research has found.

Harbouring hopes for an enjoyable career that makes them financially secure seems unimaginable and too risky, with young people saying they are able to plan only for the short term. Half of those surveyed said they were not able to think beyond the next six months.

Two-thirds of the 18- to 24-year-olds questioned had lowered their career expectations, with the cost of living, the economy and their mental health named the biggest factors.

"This research provides a blunt warning that the cost of living crisis threatens the futures, aspirations and wellbeing of an entire generation, if we do not act now," said Jonathan Townsend, the UK chief executive of the Prince's Trust.

The research, based on interviews with 2,500 young people, was carried out for the Prince's Trust with the LadBible Group, which has a consumer youth panel consisting of more than 55,000 generation Zs, born between 1997 and 2012, and millennials, born between 1981 and 1996.

"Young people have already had an integral part of their lives disrupted by the pandemic, whether it be their education or early careers, and these findings show that the continued economic uncertainty is forcing them to make decisions which will compound this further," Townsend added.

"We're seeing young people left feeling worried and unconfident about ever achieving their aspirations and thinking only in the short term - this could have significant impact for their futures and for wider society," he said.

A lack of self-confidence was cited as among the biggest problems young people had in achieving their ambitions, along with a lack of opportunity and experience.

The nationwide study found that 73% of those questioned were anxious about their futures because of the cost of living. More than two-thirds believed they would never be financially secure.

The report also found the cost of living crisis has forced over a quarter of the young people questioned to either leave education or think about leaving. At least 44% of those living at home said they cannot move out because they are needed to help their families pay the household bills.

When asked about their long-term life goals, maintaining good physical and mental health and simply living happily were among the top answers.

The findings echo previous research by the Prince's Trust that found wellbeing among young people was at a 15-year low. That research found almost half of the young people felt hopeless about the future. It was the lowest outcome in all the years the trust had been running its NatWest Youth Index, including when it launched during the global financial crisis.

Vicki Nash, an associate director at Mind, the mental health charity, said: "When the country is struggling with economic difficulties, it can really affect the mental health of younger people, with jobs being harder to find and worries about our financial safety being an everyday occurrence."

Durham Town singer Roger Whittaker dies aged 87

Donna Ferguson

The folk singer-songwriter Roger Whittaker has died at the age of 87.

His greatest hits include Durham Town (The Leavin'), The Last Farewell, New World in the Morning and his 1982 version of Wind Beneath my Wings. Worldwide, he sold nearly 50m records since the summer of 1962 when, aged 26, he began writing songs and singing in Welsh folk clubs while studying zoology, biochemistry and marine biology at Bangor University.

Whittaker made his first breakthrough in 1963 when he appeared on an Ulster Television show called This and That.

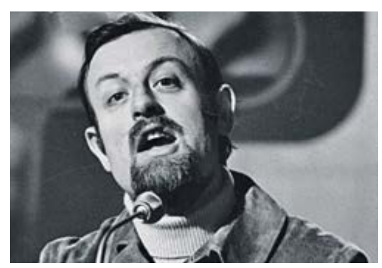
An extremely proficient whistler, his extraordinary composition Mexican Whistler later reached No 1 in three European countries.

But it was not until he released Durham Town in 1969 that he had a top 20 hit in the UK. The song's success took him by surprise, according to comments published on his website. "I just didn't have any faith in that song at all," he said. "Far from promoting the single in Britain, I went off to Finland for a cabaret season and television appearances."

By the time he returned in November, Durham Town was rapidly ascending the British charts.

Born in Nairobi to English parents in 1936, the music of east Africa left a mark on his childhood.

Whittaker retired in 2012 and is survived by Natalie, his wife of nearly 60 years, and their five children, Emily, Lauren, Jessica, Guy and Alexander.



▲ *Roger Whittaker sold 50m records after his breakthrough in 1962*

'Red wall' Tory quits levelling up role because of chronic migraine

Aletha Adu
Political corespondent

The levelling up minister Dehenna Davison has resigned from government as she revealed her struggle with chronic migraine.

The 30-year-old MP for Bishop Auckland had been widely touted as a rising star within the Conservative party, having achieved a junior ministerial role at the age of 29. She was brought in to government by the former prime minister Liz Truss and was kept in the levelling up department when Rishi Sunak took over at Downing Street.



▲ *Dehenna Davison became Bishop Auckland's first Tory MP in 2019*

In her resignation letter to Sunak, Davison said the health condition on some days made it "difficult, if not impossible to keep up with the demands of ministerial life".

"Unfortunately, for some time now I have been battling with chronic migraine, which has had a great impact on my ability to carry out the role. Some days I'm fine, but on others it is difficult, if not impossible, to keep up with the demands of ministerial life - and the timing of such days is never predictable," she wrote. "Though I have tried to mitigate, and am grateful to colleagues for their patience at times, I don't feel it is right to continue in the role.

"At such a critical time for levelling up, I believe the people of communities like mine, and across the country, deserve a minister who can give the job the energy it needs. I regret that I no longer can.

"And as my capacity is currently diminished, it feels right to focus it on my constituents and promoting conservatism from the backbenches."

Last November, Davison announced her intention to stand down as MP for Bishop Auckland, a former Labour stronghold in County Durham, at the next election, surprising many within the party given her prominence within the "red wall".

In 2019 she became the constituency's first Conservative MP with a majority of 7,962.

Davison said she would use the rest of her time in parliament to champion the cause of "better justice and support for one-punch assault victims and their families". Her father was killed by a single punch in a pub attack in Sheffield when she was 13.

Downing Street has announced that Jacob Young, the MP for Redcar, will replace her in the post.

Huge scale of fans' exposure to football gambling ads revealed



Advertising at West Ham's London Stadium

Rob Davies

Football fans were bombarded with 11,000 gambling messages during the opening weekend of the latest Premier League season, according to a study that warns of "overwhelming and inescapable" betting imagery in the game.

Clubs in the top flight agreed earlier this year to ban gambling businesses from sponsoring the front of players' shirts from 2025, but the new research - which analysed social media posts alongside hours of TV and radio - cast doubt on the potential effect of that measure, given the saturation of football with other gambling messages.

The report, commissioned by 5 News from the Bristol Hub for Gambling Harms Research, raises several key concerns including: the sheer volume of gambling messages; social media content not clearly labelled as advertising, and insufficient safer gambling messaging.

Across six live matches broadcast on TV over the season's opening weekend, 11-14 August, viewers were shown 6,966 gambling messages, including logos on shirts, pitchside hoardings and commercial breaks. Of those, only a fifth were accompanied by a message supporting safer gambling, according to the study.

The authors raised particular concerns about social media, finding that 1,902 gambling ads over the Premier League's opening weekend were seen 34m times. Of "content marketing" posts by gambling businesses - typically those that discuss or describe match action - 92% were not clearly identifiable as advertising and some may therefore breach advertising regulations, the report said.

It also found that there were 600 gambling messages during just two hours of broadcasting on the TV channel Sky Sports News, while the TalkSport radio station featured at least one gambling advert during every commercial break.

Amid growing scepticism about the Premier League's proposed ban on front-of-shirt sponsorship by gambling companies, the study cast further doubt on the measure, which the 20 top-flight clubs put forward voluntarily. They said the move was "unlikely to significantly reduce the frequency of gambling messages, as it fails to address the presence of logos on other locations … whilst clubs will still be allowed to carry logos on shirt sleeves".

The decision to forgo front-of-shirt sponsors followed public concern about children's exposure to gambling, as well as a series of high-profile instances of players being punished for breaking Football Association rules forbidding betting on games.

The government published a white paper on reform of gambling regulation earlier this year but took no action on advertising or football sponsorship.

The gambling minister, Stuart Andrew, recently told the culture select committee that there was "little evidence" of a link between adverts and gambling-related harm. However, one overarching assessment of research into gambling advertising, published in the journal Public Health in February, called for advertising restrictions.

While researchers acknowledged "significant limitations" in the evidence base, they found: "In the absence of definitive controlled studies, the substantial and consistent evidence base supports restrictions to reduce exposure to gambling advertising."

A spokesperson for the Betting and Gaming Council- the industry trade body - said its members committed 20% of TV and radio advertising to safer gambling messages and would do the same with digital advertising.

Sky Sports News declined to comment. TalkSport was approached for comment.



▲ *The Stake.com logo on Everton shirts. Top-flight clubs say they will ban shirt-front gambling ads from 2025* PHOTOGRAPH: MICHAEL REGAN/GETTY

Firefighters call for regulation of ebikes after series of blazes

Robert Booth
Social affairs correspondent

The London fire brigade has warned people against trying to put out fires involving electric bikes and has demanded "proper regulation" after a man sustained life-changing injuries when his bike caught fire on Friday, the latest in a spate of blazes.

The fire in Highgate, north London, began when the bike was left charging in a bedroom using a cable purchased online a day earlier. The owner suffered multiple burns before firefighters extinguished the blaze.

It was one of four separate ebike fires in the last 10 days in London, which resulted in more than 120 firefighters attending.

There have been nine deaths nationally from ebike and electric scooter fires in the last year, including in Cambridge, Merseyside and London, and hundreds of injuries since 2020.

The LFB's deputy commissioner, Dominic Ellis, said: "The stark reality is some of these vehicles are proving to be incredibly dangerous, particularly if they have been modified with second-hand products or if batteries are used with the wrong chargers … Proper regulation is required to help prevent people unknowingly purchasing dangerous products, such as batteries and conversion kits, from online marketplaces."

A spokesperson for the Department of Business and Trade said: "The Office for Product Safety and Standards is working closely with the fire service to review all evidence of fires involving lithium batteries in ebikes and e-scooters to ensure the product safety issues are properly assessed and action is taken to protect users from harm."



Boris Johnson described his political allies as 'the Munsters', book claims

Pippa Crerar
Political editor

Boris Johnson described his political allies as "the Munsters" and regularly hummed the Addams Family theme tune while discussing them after he had quit as foreign secretary over Theresa May's proposed Brexit deal, it has been claimed.

The former prime minister, who had returned to the Conservative backbenches in July 2018, also joked that he had "cornered the market in sex pests" among his supporters, according to a book by the Telegraph's political editor, Ben Riley-Smith.

The alleged remarks, which Johnson's office has denied, were alluded to in his grilling from MPs on the Commons liaison committee before he resigned as prime minister in July 2022, when he failed to deny that he had said "all the sex pests are supporting me".

Johnson was eventually forced to quit over his handling of a series of scandals including the row over the former Tory MP Chris Pincher, a close ally who stood down from parliament earlier this month after losing an appeal against an eight-week suspension for groping two men at a private members' club last summer.

The book, The Right To Rule, describes how Johnson, an isolated figure on the backbenches who had failed to build up a substantial support base, was "scathing" in private about the calibre of those MPs who did back him.

"They were political offcuts – 'The Munsters', as Johnson would joke, in reference to the TV show featuring Frankenstein and other misshapen ghouls," Riley-Smith wrote. "He even hummed the Addams Family theme tune when discussing them, according to two sources: 'Duddle-der-der, click-click, duddle-der-der, click-click'.

"At times the humour was darker. 'I've cornered the market in sex pests,' he joked once, according to one source. Two leadership campaign figures, who did not hear the specific remark, provide contextual evidence – one said it was like the type of random, scattergun jokes Johnson cracked; the other made an almost identical comment unprompted, suggesting such humour was not uncommon among the group."

Johnson's former chief of staff Eddie Lister, to whom he later gave a peerage, described how he was not a very "clubbable" man, adding: "He doesn't spend hours in the bar at the Commons, or the tea room, he doesn't do that. He's got no real friends amongst the MPs."

The book also claimed that Johnson sought to ignore the Office of Budget Responsibility's fiscal forecasts ahead of his first budget, scheduled for late 2019 but delayed by the election, in a move later mirrored by Liz Truss ahead of her disastrous mini-budget.

The proposal contributed to the breakdown of his relationship with his first chancellor, Sajid Javid. Downing Street wanted to use the moment to signal the end of austerity but was told by Javid that if taxes were not going to fund spending increases, then they would need to borrow to plug the gap in the public finances. His opinion was backed up by the OBR in its analysis.

> *'He even hummed the Addams Family theme tune when discussing them, according to sources'*
>
> **Ben Riley-Smith**
> *in The Right to Rule*

"Johnson and his top adviser, Dominic Cummings, came up with an eye-catching suggestion: why not just NOT do an OBR forecast? The idea was voiced by the PM himself in one of the last meetings to discuss the package. 'Can't we just not bother with the OBR?' Johnson asked Javid," Riley-Smith wrote.

The request was "rejected point blank" by Javid at a meeting, according to the book. No 10 then wanted to ditch the Conservatives' fiscal rules but was told by Javid that it would be an "absolute disaster" and set about trying to convince Johnson, the book claimed. Johnson's office denied both allegations.

It follows claims in a BBC documentary that senior government officials spoke to Buckingham Palace to express worries about Johnson's conduct in office, and discussed asking the queen to raise concerns with him during their private audiences.

Constitution
Whitehall staff raised concerns about PM with palace

Peter Walker
Deputy political editor

Senior government officials spoke to Buckingham Palace to express worries about Boris Johnson's conduct in office, and discussed asking Queen Elizabeth to raise concerns with him during their private audiences, a BBC documentary revealed last night.

It did not specify which of Johnson's actions prompted the concerns, but highlighted clashes between Dominic Cummings, who was Johnson's chief of staff at the start of his term of office, and Sir Mark Sedwill, who was then head of the civil service.

One source told the programme, Laura Kuenssberg: State of Chaos, that Johnson "had to be reminded of the constitution". According to the series, which examines political upheaval in the UK between the Brexit vote and Liz Truss's brief period as prime minister, the discussions with the palace took place around May 2020, near the start of the Covid pandemic.

Amid what are called "significant tensions" between Johnson's political staff and the civil service, the programme said calls between No 10 officials and the palace went "over and above routine communication".



▲ *Officials discussed asking Queen Elizabeth to talk to Boris Johnson about his conduct while in office*
PHOTOGRAPH: VICTORIA JONES/GETTY IMAGES

One hope among officials, the programme said, was that the queen could raise the matter in her private conversations with the prime minister. One unnamed source said the atmosphere in Downing Street during that period was "utterly grim, and totally crazy", and that relationships between political officials and civil servants were "just toxic".

The programme said Buckingham Palace had previously raised "acute concern" after Johnson forcibly suspended parliament in the summer of 2019, a move carried out in the name of the queen, but which was subsequently found to be illegal.

The former deputy cabinet secretary – the second most senior civil servant in government – Helen MacNamara, described significant tensions after Johnson had been in hospital with Covid early in the pandemic, but declined to talk about any communications with the palace.

"There were definitely times after the prime minister came back from his illness when the kind of the perception amongst the political team at No 10 about the failings of the system and the failings of the civil service and the failings of different institutions, it was just so extreme the way that they were articulating that, they were in absolutely kind of smash everything up, shut it all down, start again … we were systematically in real trouble," she said.

Johnson had already caused controversy for the palace when in 2019 he suspended the Commons for five weeks ahead of the Brexit deadline. His advice to prorogue parliament to the queen was found by the supreme court to have been unlawful.

Buckingham Palace declined to comment, according to the BBC.

Warning to patients on effect of 'biggest ever NHS walkout'

Donna Ferguson

More patients than ever before will be put at risk when consultants and junior doctors begin the "biggest walkout the NHS has ever seen", the body that speaks for health trusts said yesterday.

The latest round of industrial action in England, in which consultants will strike in a dispute over pay today and tomorrow and junior doctors tomorrow, Thursday and Friday, will force hospitals to cancel a higher number of appointments and operations than ever before, the NHS Confederation said.

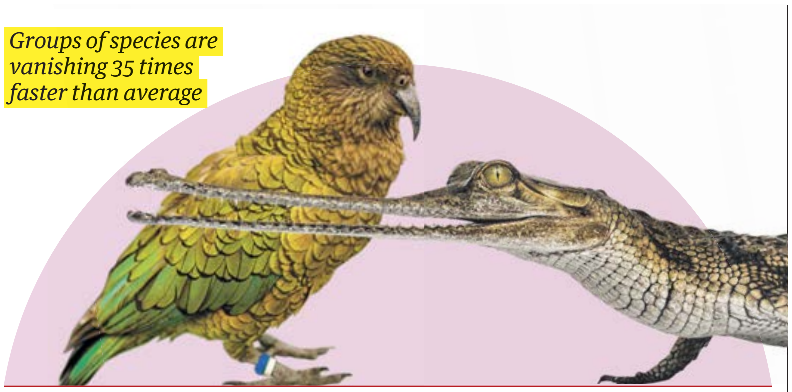
Among the patients who are being placed in the greatest danger are the increasing number of people who have already had operations cancelled due to strike action and now face having rescheduled appointments cancelled, health officials have warned.

The government will launch a consultation today over plans to impose new regulations on striking doctors and nurses to ensure hospitals provide a minimum level of cover. The regulations, which would cover urgent, emergency and "time-critical" hospital-based health services, would mean employers could issue a "work notice" compelling doctors and nurses to work during industrial action, in order to maintain "necessary and safe levels of service". Clinicians who still take industrial action could run the risk of losing their job.

35%
The increase the British Medical Association is calling for to restore doctors' pay to 2008-09 levels

The British Medical Association which represents doctors, said yesterday that it had written to Rishi Sunak and Steve Barclay, the health secretary, saying: "Strikes could be avoided if the government was to present us with a credible offer that we could put to our members."

It said there had been "constructive conversations" between the leader of the BMA consultants'



Groups of species are vanishing 35 times faster than average

Human activity speeding up species' extinction, says study

Patrick Greenfield

Groups of animal species are vanishing at a rate 35 times higher than average owing to human activity, according to researchers, who say it is further evidence that a sixth mass extinction in Earth's history is under way and accelerating.

Scientists analysing the rate at which closely related animal species have gone extinct in the past 500 years have found they would have taken 18,000 years to vanish in the absence of humans, and the rate at which they are being lost is increasing.

The study, published in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, found that at least 73 mammal, bird, reptile and amphibian species groupings have gone extinct since 1500. If trends had followed the average pre-human impact rates of extinction, just two would have been expected to disappear, they estimated. Those lost include the elephant birds of Madagascar, moa from New Zealand and Hawaiian moho honeyeaters.

Owing to habitat destruction, the climate crisis and the illegal trade in wildlife, losses are projected to accelerate in the coming years, according to the analysis. In the worst-case scenario - that all currently endangered species groups disappear by the end of the century - the rate would be 354 times above the average for the past million years.

The research focused on "genera", the plural of "genus". Groups of species are known as a genus, the taxonomic classification above species. For example, horses and zebras are in the same genus, as are dogs, wolves and coyotes.

The authors expected genera to have a lower rate of extinction than individual species. They found the opposite to be true.

Previous research on fossil records has estimated that before the impact of humans, nearly one in 10,000 genera would disappear every century. As there are about 5,400 known vertebrate genera, excluding fishes, one genus would be expected to become extinct every 250 years if these rates held, according to the paper.

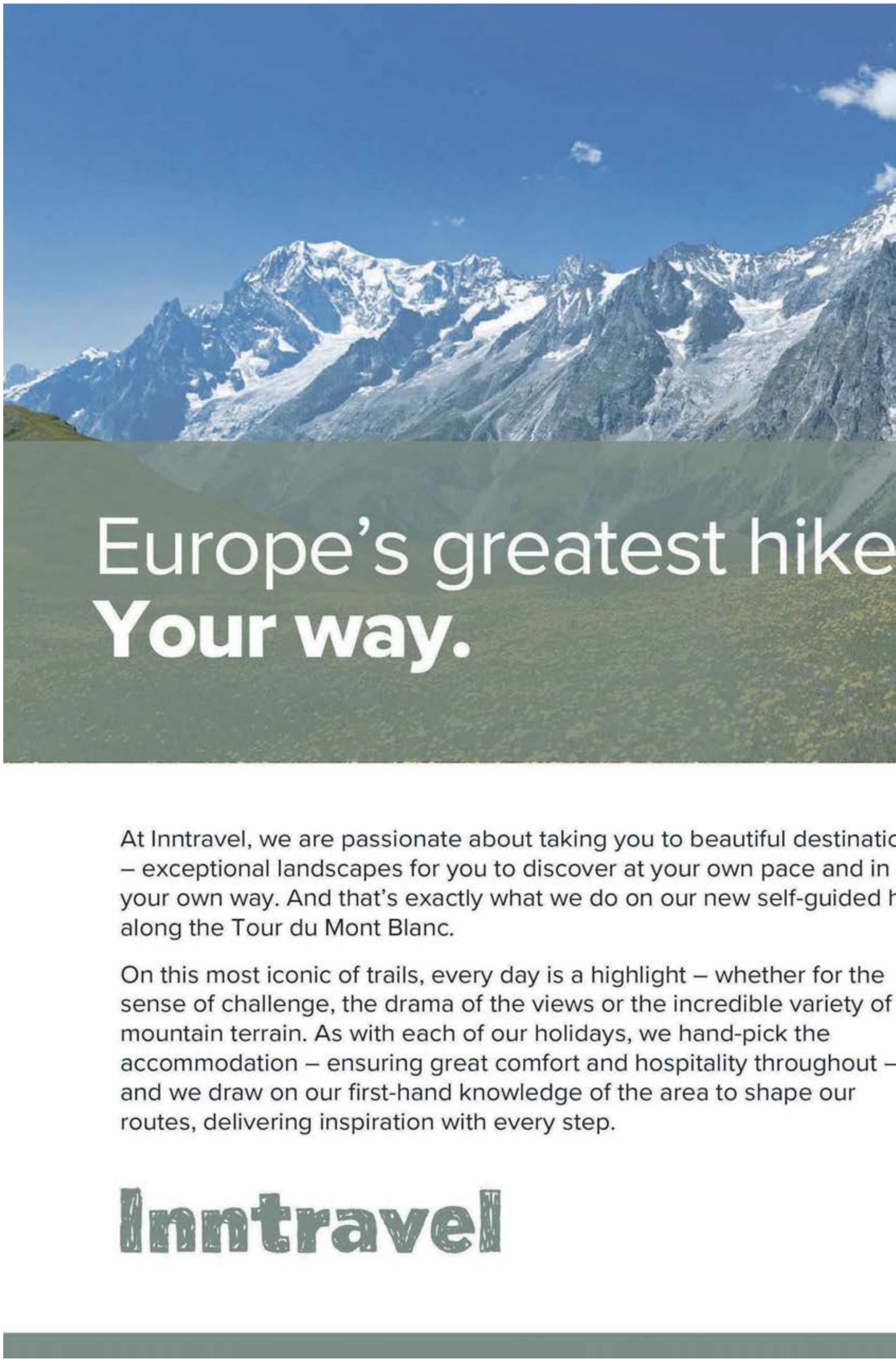
The study's main authors, Prof Gerardo Ceballos and Prof Paul Ehrlich, have previously found that species are becoming extinct on a scale akin to the event that wiped out the dinosaurs, and warn that the loss is a threat to the persistence of human civilisation.

While the claim that a sixth mass extinction is under way is disputed by some scientists, a 2019 UN assessment of the health of the planet found that 1 million species were at risk of vanishing owing to human pressures on the environment.

Ceballos, of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, who led the research, told the Guardian that the results were worse than he expected, but said there was still time to act.

"By losing all these genera, we are losing the foundations of the planet to have life in general and human life in particular," he said.

"As dramatic as the results are, what is important to mention is that we still have time. The window of opportunity is closing rapidly. There is hope but we need to act quickly," he added, calling for governments and corporations to work with each other in order to save the planet's species.



committee and government representatives about how the row might be settled. The letter said an agreement was now essential, adding: "We are seeking a pay package for 2023/24 above the level of RPI inflation for the 12 months until April 2023 (the date at which the award applies) that ensures our pay is not eroded further.

"This is not dissimilar to the settlement in Scotland for junior doctors and demonstrates that this is deliverable."

The number of operations and appointments cancelled because of industrial action is set to top 1m over the next few days, according to the confederation. Many hospitals are having to cancel operations that have already been cancelled at least once and sometimes as many as three times, the confederation said.

These cancellations are expected to particularly affect cancer patients, with a "clear risk" that the health of some patients will deteriorate the longer they are left to wait, according to healthcare leaders.

Matthew Taylor, the chief executive of the NHS Confederation, said: "Leaders are concerned that this dangerous situation is being underestimated by the government, telling us that this feels much different and more complex than previous strikes, with most reporting greater difficulties in rota planning and having to cancel huge numbers of elective operations."

Sunak's spokesperson said yesterday: "These coordinated strikes will pose a huge challenge for the NHS and for patients." There were no plans to revisit the pay deal, the spokesperson added.





▲ *The paintings have been loaned by the Royal Collection to go on display at the National Gallery for 'about two years'* PHOTOGRAPH: AMER GHAZZAL/SHUTTERSTOCK

Art review

Rebirth of Mantegna's hymn to ancient glories

The Triumphs of Caesar
National Gallery, London
★★★★★

Jonathan Jones

More than 500 years ago, Andrea Mantegna, a court artist to the Gonzaga family who ruled the northern Italian city state Mantua, painted his dream of ancient Rome. In nine large, crammed canvases, he depicted scenes from a Roman victory pageant, or triumph.

When the Gonzagas finally ran out of cash, these nine square pictures were bought by the avid art collector Charles I and installed in Hampton Court Palace, where they've spent the best part of four centuries. Now six of them have been loaned for "about two years" by Charles III to the National Gallery. This means you can see them for free, in a museum packed with Renaissance art with which to compare them. It's a new lease of life for these masterpieces.

The glory that was Rome blazes all over again in this grand yet very human recreation of the triumphs granted to Julius Caesar for his conquests in Gaul. Smoky colours and brooding faces, empty armour and paraded elephants fill the twilit cavalcade. Characters in the crowd hold you: a black standard bearer, a melancholy youth pondering what it all means, an old slave bent double under the booty he's carrying. What fascinates Mantegna about the Roman empire is its human and natural plenitude. We see the wealth of empire – the statues, tableware, siege machines and animals brought as tribute to Rome. It's both a parade for Caesar and a summing up of all such rites, a distillation of the military might of this lost empire.

The National Gallery has built new gold and blue frames to hold these scenes in two sets of three, facing each other across a gallery painted deep red. The effect is remarkable. These paintings have never looked as good.

Mantegna's Triumphs have always been recognised as masterpieces – or more correctly as a single masterpiece, for the pictures all cohere as one long panorama. Yet it can be difficult for modern eyes to enjoy these canvases as much as we're told we should. It's not just that they have faded unevenly over the centuries, making them hard to light well – an issue the National Gallery sorts out superbly. More challenging is the immense gulf in mentality between him and us. For 21st-century minds that live in a digital now, and believe in progress, it takes a leap of imagination to engage with Mantegna's passionate attempt to bring a lost age to life because he thought it was better than his own.

It's tempting to say the melancholy of these paintings hints at criticism of the Romans. But the Triumphs of Caesar want to praise Rome, not bury it. Mantegna thinks he'd have been happy in that lost, magnificent world. He holds it up as an alternative to his own age and expresses this in perhaps the most extraordinary tributes to the fascination of history that have ever been painted. He doesn't judge the Romans but tries to put himself in their far-off reality – to hear the trumpets and smell the elephant shit.

Let's hope this generous loan means a new start for the Royal Collection. True, the Triumphs are only on loan while their usual home is renovated. But the choice to put them in the National Gallery is very different from the way the Royal Collection has sometimes held its treasures tight. It's an optimistic sign that under this monarch it will be run more like a public asset and less like a private hoard.

National
Politics



Great Yarmouth in Norfolk, where the average income is £10,000 less than the equivalent just six miles inland
PHOTOGRAPH: SI BARBER/ THE GUARDIAN

> *'Where the coast goes, England follows. For nearly four decades, seaside towns have backed the election winners'*
>
> **Jenevieve Treadwell**
> *Onward*

Invest in seaside towns or face an electoral 'tidal wave', Sunak told

Heather Stewart

Rishi Sunak must commit to levelling up England's struggling seaside towns or risk a political "tidal wave" at the next general election, a Conservative thinktank has warned.

In a report called Troubled Waters, the thinktank Onward shows that communities set within 5km (3 miles) of England's coast are poorer, sicker and more crime-ridden than their inland neighbours - and calls for a £500m regeneration package.

The report includes several grim statistics. Early, preventable deaths are 15% more likely in coastal areas than inland, crime rates are 12% higher and average disposable incomes £2,800 lower.

Seaside areas voted heavily for Brexit in 2016, with 83% of English coastal constituencies voting leave, compared with 66% inland. These areas also heavily backed Boris Johnson's "get Brexit done" message at the 2019 general election. The report says coastal areas have tended to swing convincingly behind the winning party in recent polls - and could be poised to turn against the Tories.

"Where the coast goes, England follows. For nearly four decades, seaside towns and cities have backed the eventual election winners," said the report's author, Jenevieve Treadwell.

"Onward's research exposes the growing gap between declining coastal communities and the rest of England. Unless the government fully embraces coastal areas in its levelling up agenda, they risk a tidal wave against them at the next election."

The shadow levelling up secretary, Angela Rayner, blamed the plight of coastal areas on "13 years of neglect and mismanagement by the Tories". She added: "Our plan to make Britain a clean energy superpower will see a clean energy jobs boom in coastal communities and provide building blocks for a more sustainable future."

Onward highlights three factors behind coastal deprivation: the decline of industries such as fishing and shipbuilding, the seasonality of local economies, and the older populations in these areas. "The fate of industrial communities along the coast mirrors those in manufacturing-intensive towns inland facing pressures from privatisations and globalisation."

Tourism in traditional English seaside destinations has also faced long-term decline since affordable air travel arrived in the 1980s.

The gap between coastal areas and the rest of England has continued to widen in recent years, with inland economies growing more rapidly since the 2008 financial crisis. Many seaside areas have struggled to attract investment over that period and have often been left heavily reliant on seasonal tourism, which tends to have a relatively low-paid workforce.

By analysing income data, Onward shows the stark differences that emerge, even over short distances. In Great Yarmouth, on the Norfolk coast, the average worker receives £23,600 a year, but just over 10km inland it jumps to £33,800. The average income in Workington, on the Cumbrian coast, is £25,000; less than 10km inland at Cockermouth the average is £34,200.

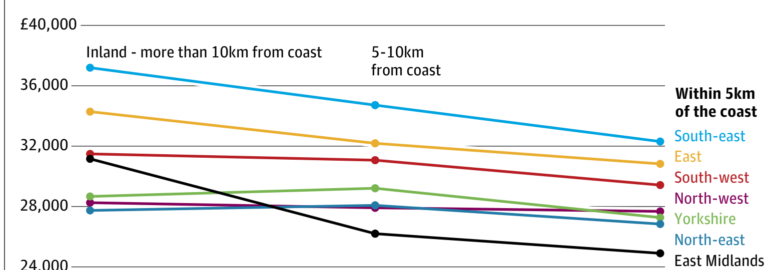
Coastal towns also have some of the worst health outcomes in the country, the report says. Blackpool is what it calls "an extreme example of coastal health challenges", with the rate of preventable deaths for under-75s 88% higher than the average across England.

Coastal neighbourhoods also tend to have more claimants of benefits than inland areas, because of higher rates of poor, ill and elderly people, the report says. Even in coastal areas where deprivation is less apparent, Onward suggests high rates of second home ownership can lead to a lack of affordable housing for local people.

The thinktank calls for the government to adopt a package of policies to regenerate coastal areas, including creating a coastal economy transformation programme worth up to £500m. It suggests giving local bodies powers over infrastructure, planning and skills, and raising taxes on second homes left standing empty for long periods.

A spokesperson for the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities said: "We are spreading opportunity and prosperity across the UK as part of our ambitious long-term levelling up programme. Since 2012 we have invested over £229m through the coastal communities fund to run 359 projects throughout the UK's rural and coastal communities helping to create jobs and boost businesses. We have allocated around £1bn from the levelling up fund to 50 projects in coastal communities."

Across England, the average coastal income before housing costs is £2,800 lower than inland



Source: Onward analysis of net annual household income (equivalised) before housing costs by middle layer super output area (MSOA) 2017-18

£2,800
The gap in disposable incomes between the average worker in a coastal area and one inland



▲ Clacton-on-Sea in Essex has higher crime rates and poorer health than nearby inland areas
PHOTOGRAPH: MARTIN GODWIN/THE GUARDIAN

'We seem to be forgotten' Why Tories will battle to hold Clacton

Hannah Moore

At Geo's Fish Bar in Clacton-on-Sea on a sunny afternoon, business is quiet enough for Peter Serghiou, the manager, to take a break. He rests his forearms on the wooden counter and gazes out at the high street of the town he grew up in.

"I mean, I like it. I've been down here all my life," says Serghiou, whose parents moved to the seaside town from Cyprus more than 70 years ago. "But I think for newcomers that come into the town, there's nothing much for them worthwhile. If they don't want to work in shops, there's nothing."

Serghiou should know. One of his brothers runs the barber shop over the road; the other has a chip shop nearby. In a place that lives and dies by the number of tourists it gets each summer, they can at least guarantee that people will always want fried potatoes and a decent haircut.

Money isn't easy to come by here. Clacton has the highest proportion of people classed as economically inactive in the UK, and like all of the coastal areas highlighted in a report by the thinktank Onward, this seaside resort on the Essex coast has higher crime rates, lower disposable incomes and poorer health than nearby inland areas.

"Trying to get a doctor's appointment is ridiculous," says Roberta Hicks, who works at one of the amusement arcades near the seafront. "I have to queue up at my doctor's surgery at about 7.15am, physically queue, because there's no point ringing."

In the nearly three years she has lived in Clacton she has not had access to an NHS dentist.

Beverley Birch, who moved here 40 years ago from Birmingham with her husband, Stephen, says: "It needs a lot of investment, which a lot of seaside towns do. But you do seem to be forgotten."

The couple voted leave in the EU referendum, as did 70% of people here. They have only praise for the constituency's former Ukip MP, Douglas Carswell, though the Conservative incumbent, the remain-voting Giles Watling, gets short shrift. "He doesn't seem interested," says Stephen.

On the forthcoming election, Watling says: "I will probably face an uphill battle. They might boil that down to doctors' appointments problems, dentistry problems, but [really] it's because of my stance on Brexit."

He is right to fear a challenge. At elections, coastal communities tend to act as bellwethers for the rest of the country. About two-thirds of them are held by the Conservatives, but with Rishi Sunak's approval ratings 14 points below those of the Labour leader, Keir Starmer, Watling needs to work hard to persuade his constituents to stick with him.

He mentions the £20m levelling up grant the town centre won this year as a marker of his success. "We're always talked about as this 'desperate' place," he says. "It isn't desperate, it's fantastic."

Stefan Pitsillides, 55, a recovery worker for people with drug and alcohol addictions, says: "I've never voted Conservative in my life. I don't think I will be doing so in the next election." He helps run the community outreach bus, which parks up in Clacton every Friday, the "busiest area" in its route around the Tendring district. "It's quite a deprived area," he says. "There's a lot of issues with people sleeping rough on the beach and stuff like that."

The SOS bus, part-funded by the council and local agencies, provides a space for people to get help with homelessness, housing benefits, mental health support and food vouchers. Today it is busy.

This bright green bus is a visual symbol of hope in a town where many say they feel forgotten.

Return of Liz Truss

Mini-budget market crisis the fault of 'Bank and the media'

Peter Walker
Deputy political editor



▲ Liz Truss at her speech in London: 'Lots of people made lots of mistakes'

Liz Truss set out her intent to be the Conservatives' beacon for lower taxes and smaller government despite her disastrous 49 days inside No 10, arguing yesterday that the economic damage under her rule was largely the result of "groupthink" from officials and the media.

In a pugnacious and lengthy Q&A after a speech in London, Truss promised to push her message at the Conservative party conference in Manchester next month. She will then expand on it in a book.

While she was careful not to directly criticise Rishi Sunak, Truss implied strongly the prime minister was part of a failed economic model backed up by the Bank of England, the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) and others.

She took some responsibility for the markets crisis that followed her government's tax-cutting mini-budget a year ago – "lots of people made lots of mistakes" – but said the main blame was with the Bank for maintaining artificially low interest rates for too long.

Truss's intervention, and pledge to continue to push for economic ideas she said "aren't fashionable on the London dinner party circuit", prompted strong criticism, including from Conservative MPs.

Conor Burns, MP for Bournemouth West, said Truss's best contribution to the party would be "sustained silence", while Damian Green, MP for Ashford, said he was "glad she's not responsible" for this year's budget.

Labour said the tax cuts Truss called for during her speech and Q&A, including a reduction in corporation tax, abolishing the windfall tax on energy firms and bringing in VAT-free shopping for tourists, would cost more than £30bn a year.

Asked if her economic record in office had damaged the party's brand, Truss accused the questioner of echoing opposition ideas. "I really want to challenge this phrase 'crashed the economy'," she told the Institute for Government event. "The fact is that since I left office, both mortgage rates and gilt rates have gone higher than they were at the time of the mini-budget. So I just think you are repeating a line to take from Labour."

The Bank had been "pumping the system full of money", keeping interest rates low, and allowing "excessive government spending", Truss said. "Interest rates were going to go up anyway. I think the real failure was not to tell people, years and years ago, that interest rates were artificially low. That was the problem."

Asked why she did not have the OBR assess the mini-budget before it was delivered, Truss said it had not been asked to check much bigger spending commitments during the Covid pandemic. "So I think it's interesting that media organisations choose to target the mini-budget for not having an OBR forecast, but don't mention this when it's about spending," she said.

"I do think that reveals a mindset which is: spending is good. They will always be relaxed about that, but cutting taxes is somehow a countercultural thing to do. I think that's reflected in the media. I think it's reflected in the polity more broadly."

Truss also accused the OBR of leaking calculations that there was a £70bn hole in the mini-budget to try to undermine her. The OBR denied this, saying it had given any forecasts it made only to the Treasury.

While arguing that financial markets were necessarily influenced by politics, Truss conceded that she misjudged their likely response: "If we'd known the fragility of the markets, we would have done things differently. These kind of questions are quite difficult because a lot of it, the way I did things, was basically the way I am, and my character."

Asked if she accepted the view of many Tory MPs that her government had been fundamentally incompetent, Truss said: "What I didn't want to do is point fingers. Of course, it was a very difficult circumstance and lots of people made lots of mistakes. There's no doubt about that."

Sketch
John Crace



Few do shamelessness quite like the 49-day prime minister

You've got to hand it to Liz Truss. Few politicians do shamelessness quite like her. Or turn lack of self-awareness into an art form. Imagine being everyone's favourite for the title of worst prime minister of all time. Worse even than David Cameron, Theresa May, Boris Johnson or Rishi Sunak. That would be enough to send most normal, sensate beings crawling under a stone for eternity.

But not our Liz. Almost exactly a year after her mini-budget crashed the economy, adding billions to the national debt and thousands to people's mortgages, she's back. And the prime minister who only lasted 49 days in the job before being forced to resign by her own party wants us to know that she regrets nothing. Narcissism has been a trait of many recent prime ministers, but this is upping the delusional ante.

Still, there's one thing no one can take away from her. She has at least advanced the cause of women in politics. Sort of. Not so long ago, women had to be twice as good as men to succeed to the top jobs in government. Truss has shattered that particular glass ceiling. She is living proof that a woman can now be every bit as useless as a man and still become prime minister. Admittedly, May had nudged us in that direction, but Truss is an icon of incoherence, a beacon for the brainless everywhere. Oxford should be rethinking its PPE course as we speak.

The relaunch took place at the offices of the Institute for Government in central London. Not generally known as a venue for comedy gigs, but even a thinktank has to diversify these days. After a brief introduction from the IfG's Hannah White, Truss got started. It went like this: our debt levels were the highest they had ever been. And she should know, because she had added to them to the tune of £45bn during her seven weeks in office. And 72% of people agreed the UK was now poorer than it had been. Again, she should know. Because few people had done more to bankrupt the country. But her tax cuts had only ever been fiscal restraint in disguise, she insisted. If only people had given her a chance, the country would now be well on the road to recovery.

That was just the beginning of the Truss fantasy. Because now she was asking us to believe that the entire political and economic establishment had been kidnapped by a socialist cabal sometime in the past 30 years and the UK had in effect been run by Moscow station for decades. The Office for Budget Responsibility and the Treasury? Communist sleeper cells dedicated to bringing down free market capitalism.

Weirdly, there were a handful of believers in the crowd. Principally Nigel Farage and the increasingly absurd David Frost, along with some fanboys who tutted loudly whenever the media asked any challenging questions, such as: why can't you just say sorry? Or say nothing? Ah, said Truss. "I'm writing a book which will be out in April." Then everything would be clear. Aargh. Not another book. We've only just recovered from May's. Truly, they spoil us.

Woman, 35, appears in court charged with murder of her parents

PA Media

A woman has been remanded in custody after being charged with murdering her parents.

Virginia McCullough, 35, is accused of murdering John and Lois McCullough between 21 August 2018 and 15 September 2023 in Chelmsford, Essex, according to a court charge sheet. Essex police said she had been charged with the murders of a man and a woman in their 70s. It is understood they are the defendant's parents.

McCullough was not asked to enter pleas during a two-minute hearing at Chelmsford magistrates court yesterday. She spoke only to confirm her personal details.

McCullough is due to appear before Basildon crown court today for a bail application hearing.

Essex police said they began an investigation after receiving reports of concern for the wellbeing of the two people in their 70s. The force said it believed the pair had died.



▲ *An artist's sketch of Virginia McCullough in court yesterday*

An Essex police spokesperson said: "A woman has been charged with two counts of murder following an investigation by detectives and staff from our serious crime directorate.

"On Wednesday 13 September, we received reports of concerns for the welfare of two people aged in their 70s … Our strong belief based on all the evidence available is that the two people in question are no longer alive." The force said it had been authorised by the Crown Prosecution Service to charge McCullough with two counts of murder.



*24 months Standard unlimited data SIM from £20 for the first 12M then £25 per month from month 13 plus annual price rises. **From 2024, each April the monthly charge will increase by up to December's CPI rate + 3.9%.** Price Plan monthly charge includes £5 discount for paying by a recurring method such as direct debit.

Paedophile football coach Barry Bennell dies in prison aged 69

Robyn Vinter

The serial paedophile Barry Bennell, who abused boys as a football coach, has died in prison, the Ministry of Justice said yesterday.

Bennell died of cancer at the age of 69 on Saturday while serving combined prison sentences at HMP Littlehey in Cambridgeshire for more than 50 offences against 22 boys while coaching them in the 1980s and 1990s.

A Prison Service spokesperson said: "Prisoner Barry Bennell died at HMP Littlehey on 16 September 2023. As with all deaths in custody, the prisons and probation ombudsman will investigate."

Bennell's first conviction was in Florida in the US for an offence he had carried out while on tour with a Staffordshire youth football team, and he served four years in prison for four counts of indecent assault on a 13-year-old boy. He was then deported after a Channel 4 Dispatches investigation to stand trial for attacks that had taken place in the UK.

In June 1998 he pleaded guilty at Chester crown court to 23 counts of sexual abuse of 15 boys aged between nine and 14, between 1978 and 1992. He was sentenced to nine years in prison.

In 2016, a former professional footballer, Andy Woodward, told the Guardian he had been a victim of Bennell, with other former players following suit.

Bennell, also known as Richard Jones, was further jailed for 30 years in 2018 after being convicted of 52 child sexual offences against 12 boys.

Sentencing him, the judge at Liverpool crown court said: "To those boys you appeared as a god … in reality you were the devil incarnate. You stole their childhoods and their innocence."

He was ordered to serve an additional four years in 2020 after pleading guilty to other offences against two boys.

When he was sentenced in 2018, the recorder of Liverpool, Judge Goldstone, said he "may well die in prison". His final prison sentence, in 2020, was the fifth time that he had been jailed.

> ***'You stole those boys' childhoods and their innocence'***
>
> **Judge Goldstone**
> *Sentencing Bennell, 2018*

At that hearing, the court was told he had a detached retina after being attacked in prison and was in remission from cancer.

Bennell was a juniors coach at clubs such as Crewe Alexandra, Manchester City and Stoke City when he carried out attacks on boys who were promising young footballers.

Many later spoke about how deeply the abuse had affected them, in some cases ruining their careers.

Earlier this year, a court found Manchester City could not be held responsible for the attacks carried out while he worked there.

Mr Justice Johnson accepted the accounts of the men whom he attacked when they were boys but said that although there was a "good explanation" for the delay in the claims against City, they were too late for there to be a fair trial of the club.

He said that even if the claims were not time-barred, the fact that Bennell was a scout for City, coached their feeder teams and helped to organise trial games did not make the club vicariously liable for his abuse, as the eight men who had brought the case had argued.



▲ *Barry Bennell was sentenced for more than 50 child sexual offences*

Fashion Burberry show pulls off a modern take on outdoors Britishness

Jess Cartner-Morley

The scene before the biggest show of London fashion week was quintessentially British: an orderly queue for tea, coffee and eccles cakes. Britishness, along with trenchcoats and check scarves, is what Burberry stands for. This is surely the only catwalk show where the Hollywood action hero Jason Statham, the acclaimed choreographer Wayne McGregor and the Arsenal striker Bukayo Saka can be found rubbing shoulders in the front row.

The first look on to the catwalk was a trenchcoat. The trench is a Burberry staple - but this had a notably slimmer cut, an elegant dropped-waist silhouette, and was black rather than beige. There were more trenchcoats to follow: some sleeveless, some leather, all of them sleek and minimal.

The Burberry trenchcoat looked more desirable and modern on this catwalk, held in a marquee on Highbury Fields, London, than it had for years. This seems a good sign that the 37-year-old chief creative officer, Daniel Lee, who grew up in Yorkshire not far from the brand's coat factory, is the right man for the Burberry job.

Unfortunately for Lee, while a killer trenchcoat sends a strong message on the catwalk, what matters on the shopfloor are bags and shoes. Burberry has set an ambitious business plan to boost sales from £2.8bn to £4bn in the next five years, which means increasing its slice of the all-important accessories market.

£4bn

Burberry's annual sales target for five years' time, from £2.8bn today. It aims to boost sales of accessories



▲ *A model on the catwalk yesterday for Burberry's spring/summer 2024 show at London fashion week*
PHOTOGRAPH: HOLLIE ADAMS/REUTERS

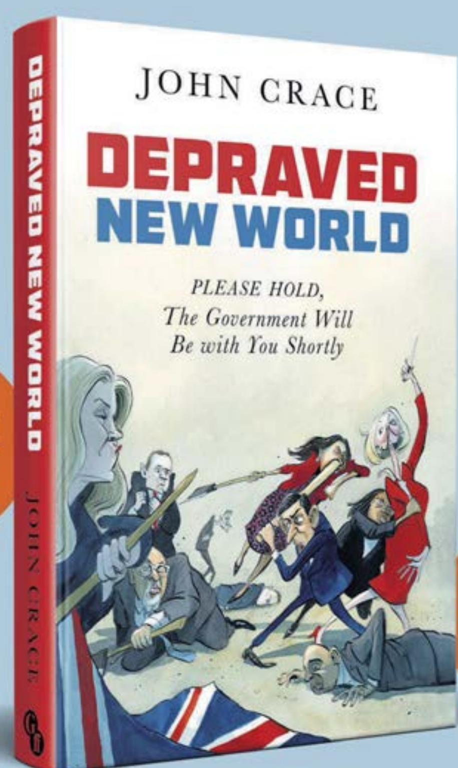
Lee, who scored a cult fashion hit with cushion-soft handbags while designing the Bottega Veneta label in Milan, reprised the theme for Burberry with squishy, huggable bags that slotted under the arm. The focus on leather goods will please Burberry's accountants, but it did not please the Peta protester who managed a brief appearance on the runway holding a banner: "Animals Are Not Clothing."

As any politician will tell you, identifying a warm and fuzzy vision of Britain that gathers all-comers around the campfire is a thankless task right now. While Frenchness can be conjured up with a striped T-shirt and a well-cut blazer, Britishness is a stubbornly political concept. The totems of British fashion - from punk's safety pins to Savile Row suits, from wellies to football shirts - are watermarked with associations of class and history, and the pitfalls for designers who try to represent Britishness are endless. The critics who once sneered at Christopher Bailey's nostalgic, romantic Burberry for being a Sunday-night-drama version of Britishness were this season equally cross with Lee, accusing him of appropriating working-class culture by staging a Burberry pop-up at Norman's, a traditional London caff.

But Lee has a new strategy to talk about Britain without making any of them cross, by landing on every Briton's favourite topic - the weather. Lee told the Business of Fashion website before this show: "The brand's legacy is ultimately the outdoors … that's the thing we have in mind when we work on everything." Hence the focus on trenchcoats, which are as much about weather as they are about fashion. Coats are Burberry's bread and butter, but this collection will go on sale next summer, so there were strawberry prints too - a symbol of British summertime, given a catwalk twist in the electric blue that Lee has picked as Burberry's house colour.

And there was another good sign for Burberry, when the show ended, that the brand is on the right track: the Burberry blankets laid on each seat were seized upon by the A-list crowd as ad hoc party favours, with not a single one remaining once the venue was empty.

From the ousting of Boris to the dawn of a new era … sort of
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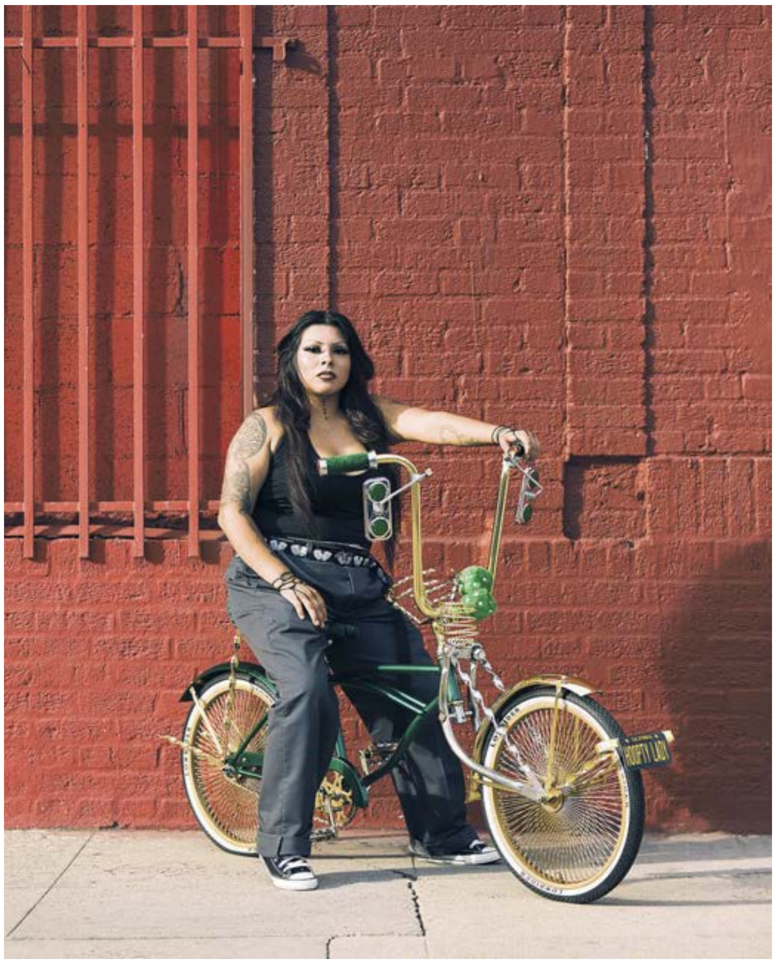
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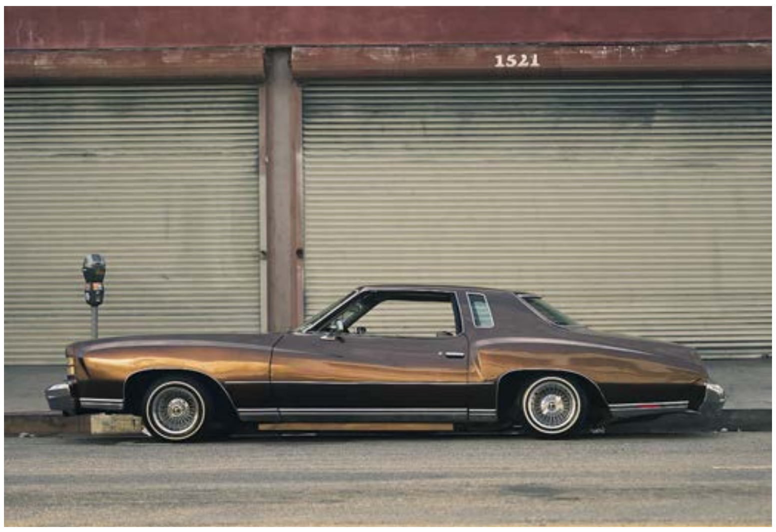
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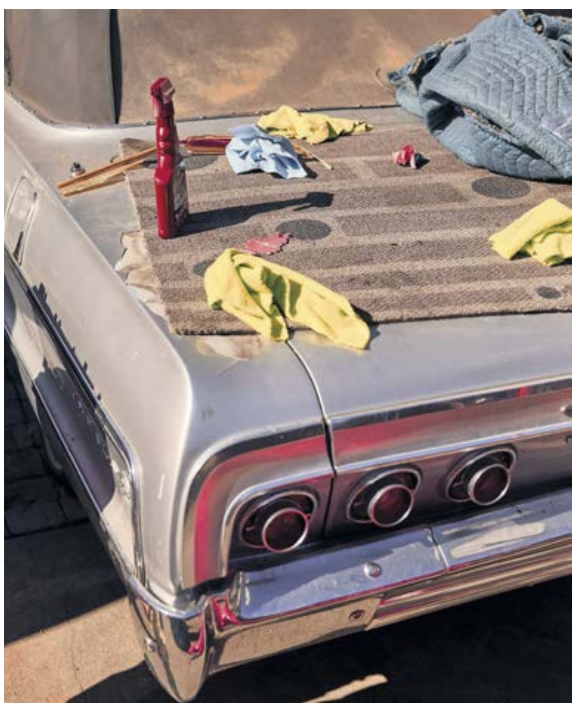


▲ *Wicked, a member of Hoopty Car Club, with her lowrider bicycle in Los Angeles. Customised bikes inspired by lowrider cars date back to the 60s*

▶ *Diana, AKA Danger, West Hills. 'No matter where you in California, you will see a lowrider … I grew up around different old cars'*



▲ *Lowrider culture began among Mexican-American communities in the US in the 1940s, with the aim of getting the cars to cruise low and slow*



▶ *Work in progress on a 1964 Chevrolet Impala, a model particularly prized by lowriders, at Sal's Garage, Pasadena*





▼ *Pasadena Car Club on an evening cruise. 'I can say lowriding brings me closer to my community,' says Arnold, a member of the club*





How low can you go? Lowriding is the Mexican-American subculture of customising cars so that they hug the road surface as closely as possible. The photographer Owen Harvey joined the lowriders of California on the road, documenting the drivers and their ornately decorated and augmented vehicles at street parties and car cruises, in a celebration of a treasured part of Chicano culture.

PHOTOGRAPHS: OWEN HARVEY

▲ *A luxuriously customised interior, and, right, Vanessa, AKA Chingona, at a street party and cruise in Los Angeles: 'It's been a part of my life since I was a child'*



World



Biden unfreezes $6bn of Iranian oil money in prisoner swap agreement

Patrick Wintour
Haroon Janjua

The US and Iran have freed five detainees each in a controversial prisoner swap involving the unfreezing by the Biden administration of $6bn (£4.8bn) of Iranian oil money.

In an elaborate and delicate diplomatic deal, months in the making, the five Americans – some held for nearly a decade – were taken from hotels in Tehran to a plane that flew to Qatar, before heading to Washington.

"Today, five innocent Americans who were imprisoned in Iran are finally coming home," Joe Biden said. "[They] will soon be reunited with their loved ones after enduring years of agony, uncertainty and suffering."

Among the prisoners is the conservationist Morad Tahbaz, a British-American citizen. Iranian state media confirmed yesterday afternoon that five Iranian citizens imprisoned in the US – mostly for sanctions-busting offences – had also been released. Only two have chosen to return to Iran.

Qatar mediated the deal, starting with the transfer of the Iranian cash to bank accounts in Qatar and Switzerland. The prisoners were allowed to board the plane only after the transfer was completed. Apart from Tahbaz, only two Americans have been publicly identified.

It is not clear if the deal will lead to a wider diplomatic breakthrough, or a new, less ambitious route to constrain Iran's civil nuclear programme, in which Tehran agrees to lower its stocks of highly enriched uranium.

Fatemeh Aman, a senior fellow at the Washington-based Middle East Institute, said: "It's a positive act and many countries at odds with one another have had this kind of deal. However, this does not mean the end of Iran-US animosity. The hardline government of Iran may declare it a victory, but other major issues, such as the Iran nuclear dilemma, will not go away so easily. I believe some hardline factions need 'death to America' for their existence."

Iran's president, Ebrahim Raisi, said yesterday that the release of the detainees by Tehran was "purely a humanitarian action". He added: "Unfortunately, history has shown the lack of trust towards the United States because it has trampled upon commitments and broken promises repeatedly."

Republican senators in the US and some former Iranian political detainees have accused Biden of striking a deal that will encourage Iran to keep hostage-taking as a central part of its diplomatic arsenal. The US state department said the money being released was oil money owed to Iran and frozen by the Trump administration in 2018 when the US left the Iran nuclear deal. Last week, three European countries, including the UK, accused Iran of building stocks of

US-Iran deal
The freed detainees

The US citizens previously imprisoned in Iran are:

Siamak Namazi
Namazi, 51, a businessman, was detained in 2015. Months later his father, Baquer, was detained. In 2016 they were given 10-year sentences for allegedly spying and cooperating with the US government. Baquer left Iran last year for medical treatment.

Emad Sharghi
The businessman, 59, was arrested in 2018 and in 2020 was sentenced to 10 years in jail on espionage charges.

Morad Tahbaz
Tahbaz, 67, an environmentalist, was given a 10-year sentence in 2019 for "assembly and collusion against Iran's national security".

Two as yet unnamed

The Iranian detainees in the US are:

Mehrdad Moin-Ansari, Kambiz Attar Kashani, Reza Sarhangpour Kafrani, Amin Hassanzadeh and Kaveh Afrasiabi
Iran said two would remain in the US, one would fly to a third country and two would return home.
Reuters

'I have listened'
Drew Barrymore halts filming of chatshow
Page 25



'A new lease on life'
The Libyans who cheated death in Derna
Page 26

◀ *Siamak Namazi and Morad Tahbaz at Doha international airport yesterday after leaving Iran*
PHOTOGRAPH: MOHAMMED DABBOUSE/REUTERS

highly enriched uranium that could have no possible civilian purpose.

The US said Qatar would ensure that the unfrozen money is spent only on goods – primarily food, agricultural items and medicine – not subject to sanctions. However, critics said it would be impossible to police.

Brett McGurk, Washington's national security coordinator for the Middle East, defended the deal. "The president ultimately needs to weigh the terms available through diplomacy against leaving American citizens for years or even decades in Evin prison. In this case, the president made the hard decision to move ahead."

The five Americans were previously transferred out of Evin jail in Tehran to hotels in the capital.

Tahbaz was left in Iran when the British-Iranian dual nationals Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe and Anoosheh Ashoori were released as part of a deal negotiated by the then UK foreign secretary, Liz Truss.

Amnesty International said it was delighted for Tahbaz and his family, "who've campaigned tirelessly for his release, often battling with UK officials who've never treated Morad's plight with anywhere near the urgency and seriousness it merited".

The deal is a diplomatic win for Qatar as a mediator between two countries that deeply distrust one another.

Michael McCaul, the Republican chair of the US House foreign affairs committee, has accused Biden of being naive and returning to the mistakes of the past. The Republican presidential contender Ron DeSantis described Biden's decision as outrageous, saying it "has sent a signal to hostile regimes that if you take Americans, you could potentially profit … A rogue regime should know that if you touch the hair on the head of any American, you will have hell to pay."

Richard Ratcliffe, the husband of Zaghari-Ratcliffe, has criticised the timing of the release, so close to the first anniversary of Mahsa Amini's death in Iranian police custody.

Iranian Americans, whose US citizenship is not recognised by Tehran, are often pawns between the two nations. In the last week, there have been reports that three dual nationals have been arrested in Iran.

It was confirmed two weeks ago for the first time that Johan Floderus, an EU diplomat who travelled to Iran, has been jailed since April 2022.

> ***'This sends a signal to a hostile state that if you take Americans, you could profit'***
>
> **Ron DeSantis**
> *Presidential contender*

Analysis
Patrick Wintour



Move not without risks but it may signal new direction in western diplomacy with Tehran

Soon after her release, Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe remarked that freedom for a former Iranian political prisoner was never complete since those freed always recalled those left behind. But when the five Americans released from Iranian captivity touched down in Qatar on their way back to their families, the mood would have been simple, joyous and emotional. By contrast, the drawn-out diplomacy that had led to this moment was the polar opposite – complex, fraught and calculating.

Iranian-US relations, always one long bargain, are in flux, with currents heading in different directions, some towards confrontation and others towards a de-escalation of tensions. It has been unclear for months whether Joe Biden's administration favoured one option above the other, or indeed preferred the status quo. But in taking the decision to release $6bn (£4.8bn) of Iranian oil proceeds frozen in a South Korean bank account by US sanctions, the president prioritised securing the release of the five, some of whom have been in jail for a decade. That is a tribute to the public campaigns calling for their release, but it may also signal a new direction in western diplomacy with Iran.

Biden has taken a double risk; he is taking flak from Republicans who argue the deal will encourage further state hostage-taking, and who feel emboldened to claim that confrontation with Iran remains the only viable strategy. He also faces criticism from less partisan sources. The deal, after all, has been struck at a time when Iran's president, Ebrahim Raisi, is selling Iranian drones to Russia to use against Ukrainian cities. And some in the diaspora feel that by acting so soon after the first anniversary of the death of Mahsa Amini in a Tehran police cell, the Biden team has shown it puts US self-interest ahead of Iranians' struggle for human rights.

> *In New York, Ebrahim Raisi's aides say Iran will push the US to see if the prisoner swap can lead to wider regional de-escalation*

In New York, on the sidelines of the UN general assembly, Raisi's aides say Iran will push the US to see if the prisoner swap can lead to wider de-escalation in the region. The obvious place to start would be Yemen. Iranian-backed Houthi rebels were in Riyadh last week for peace talks. But Biden would also like to see an elusive normalisation of relations between Saudi Arabia and Israel, something he will discuss with the Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, when they meet.

Netanyahu is more focused on using his speech to the general assembly to warn the west never to trust Iran or settle for a touted new informal agreement to constrain Iran's nuclear programme. The essence of the informal agreement – a modest plan B in comparison with the comprehensive 2015 nuclear deal abandoned by Donald Trump – is that Iran would agree as a starting point to keep its stock of enriched uranium to 60% purity, close to but below the weapons-grade threshold necessary to make a nuclear bomb. In return there would be some easing of US sanctions. There are some preliminary signs that Iran may be willing to do that, although in reality that may become part of an indefinite negotiation with the west.

▶ *António Guterres, the UN secretary general, told the summit the sustainable development goals needed a rescue plan*
PHOTOGRAPH: MIKE SEGARD/REUTERS



UN admits that it is not on track to end hunger or poverty

Patrick Wintour
New York

Western leaders went on a charm offensive on the opening day of the UN general assembly yesterday as they were forced to defend their record on meeting the organisation's sustainable development goals (SDGs) to end global inequality.

At a summit in New York amounting to a stocktake on progress towards meeting the goals by 2030, all sides acknowledged there was little chance that the ambitious commitments set in 2015, including ending extreme poverty and safeguarding the environment, will be met on schedule.

A plea by the UN secretary general, António Guterres, for all sides to avoid recriminations about the cause of the failure and instead use the two-day summit to agree a global rescue plan was only partially heeded. The 17 goals, which include 169 specific targets, were adopted in September 2015. Most assessments say only 15% of the targets are on track.

The leaders adopted a 43 paragraph political declaration, brokered by Ireland and Qatar, that warned years of sustainable development gains were being reversed. It said: "Millions of people have fallen into poverty, hunger and malnutrition are becoming more prevalent, humanitarian needs are rising, and the impacts of climate change are more pronounced. This has led to increased inequality exacerbated by weakened international solidarity and a shortfall of trust to jointly overcome these crises."

Guterres told the summit: "Instead of leaving no one behind, we risk leaving the SDGs behind … the SDGs need a global rescue plan."

Guterres was able to see off a last minute démarche led by Russia and an alliance of nine countries that wanted to insert opposition to the use of unilateral sanctions into the declaration.

The UN said this month that there are 745 million more people either moderately or severely hungry in the world today than in 2015, and the world is far off track in its efforts to meet the UN goal to end hunger by 2030. The world is at hunger levels not seen since 2005, and food prices remain higher in more countries than between 2015 and 2019.

The solutions laid out in the political declaration cover finance for developing countries, including clear support for Guterres's proposal for an SDG stimulus of at least $500bn (£403bn) annually, as well as a more effective debt relief mechanism.

The declaration also calls for changing the business model of multilateral development banks to offer private finance at more affordable rates for developing countries, and endorses reform of the international finance architecture which Guterres has labelled "outdated, dysfunctional and unfair".

Dennis Francis, the president of the UN general assembly, said: "In the recent past there has been an unfortunate deficit of trust and this has undermined the capacity of the multilateral process." He added that "wounds still linger over the handling of the pandemic" but "with concerted, ambitious action, it is still possible that, by 2030, we could lift 124 million additional people out of poverty and ensure that some 113 million fewer people are malnourished".

The agenda of the UN this week has been shaped to meet the concerns of the global south, including a separate climate summit tomorrow.

But the strength of the diplomatic olive branch was weakened by the absence of Rishi Sunak and Emmanuel Macron. France said Macron had a scheduling conflict, hosting King Charles in Paris this week.

> **15%**
> *Proportion of the 169 targets of the sustainable development goals that assessments say are on track*

Ex-deacon accused of taking payments to help Ukrainians escape conscription

Lorenzo Tondo
Shaun Walker *Kyiv*

A former deacon in the Ukrainian port city of Odesa has been detained on allegations that he took bribes to help men evade conscription by disguising them as church missionaries so they could leave the country.

The Ukrainian security service (SBU) said last week that the former deacon belonged to the Ukrainian Orthodox church, one of two main branches of orthodoxy in the country and until recently linked to the Moscow patriarchy.

Investigators said the former deacon – who has not been named – successfully facilitated the escape of at least six individuals to several EU countries.

"The suspect had compiled lists of missionaries who were intended to travel abroad on behalf of the diocese's leader and the religious community, with the aim of becoming priests," the SBU said.

He allegedly pocketed about $4,500 (£3,600) from each man in bribes to certify that their departure from the country was necessary for the diocese's work in Europe. The SBU has seized his computers, mobile phones, sim cards and a sum of US dollars in cash. If convicted he could face up to nine years in prison.

It is the latest in a series of corruption scandals over draft evasion in Ukraine. Last month, the Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, fired every regional recruitment head in the country citing endemic corruption in the apparatus.

In a further development last week, the prosecutor general's office in Odesa revealed that the leadership of a regional police force had been assisting dozens of men in evading conscription.

As a result the head of the military medical commission and two secretaries are under investigation for allegedly falsifying dozens of medical certificates to demonstrate that the individuals were unfit for military service. Each certificate reportedly cost between $7,000 and $10,000.

During the first months of the war, as hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians signed up for volunteer battalions and to help the army in other ways, there was no great need to enforce mobilisation rules. However, 18 months into the war, with tens of thousands of casualties and many troops at the front weary and in need of rotation, the army has increasingly turned to mobilisation, often handing out call-up papers on the street.

> *'The suspect had compiled lists of missionaries who were intended to travel abroad'*
>
> **SBU**
> *Ukraine security service*

Male Ukrainians of conscription age are allowed to cross the border only if they are financially supporting three or more children under the age of 18, are single fathers of children under 18, or have children or are guardians of children with disabilities.

In many cities, Telegram channels offer people keen to avoid the draft information on where conscription officers have been spotted that day and videos have gone viral of officers bundling men into vans.

Many business owners report men unwilling to come to work, scared they could be conscripted if they leave the house.

For those with money, there have been plenty of opportunities to buy their way out of mobilisation, usually by purchasing a doctored medical certificate that provides an exemption from military service and allows them to leave the country. The price has ranged from a few hundred dollars at the beginning of the war to about $5,000 in Odesa, several people have told the Guardian.

Klishchiivka
Kyiv's troops retake key village near Bakhmut

Lorenzo Tondo
Kharkiv



▲ *Ukrainian soldiers fire artillery at Russian positions during the fight for Klishchiivka* PHOTOGRAPH: DIEGO HERRERA CARCEDO/ANADOLU AGENCY/GETTY IMAGES

Ukraine has said its forces recaptured the strategically important village of Klishchiivka in the west of the country in what would mark Kyiv's second notable counteroffensive victory in three days.

"Today I would like to particularly commend the soldiers who, step by step, are returning to Ukraine what belongs to it, namely in the area of Bakhmut," Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, said in his nightly video address on Sunday.

Zelenskiy praised the soldiers fighting near Bakhmut and singled out those who had retaken Klishchiivka, saying: "Well done!" He also said Kyiv was "preparing new defence solutions", adding that "air defence and artillery are the priority", without providing details.

On Sunday photos circulated on Ukrainian Telegram channels showed soldiers waving yellow and blue flags among the ruins of Klishchiivka.

Confirmation of the village's recapture came at about 7pm when Zelenskiy's chief of staff, Andriy Yermak, published a photo on Telegram with the caption: "Ukraine always reclaims what is rightfully its own."

Hanna Maliar, a deputy defence minister, shared a video of Ukrainian forces and the sound of fighting in the background. Russia was still trying to regain lost positions despite Klishchiivka's liberation, she wrote on Telegram, adding: "Today we had to fight off enemy attacks all day."

Col Gen Oleksandr Syrskyi, the commander of Ukraine's ground forces, also confirmed the recapture of the village, which Russia had taken control of in January. It had a population of about 400 before the Russian invasion and is approximately 6 miles south of Bakhmut, the city that fell into Russian hands in May after months of heavy fighting.

"Klishchiivka was cleared of Russians," Syrskyi said on social media.

Illia Yevlash, a spokesperson for Ukrainian troops fighting in the east, said the battle had inflicted "powerful damage" on Russian airborne units, the Akhmat battalion of the Chechen leader, Ramzan Kadyrov, the Storm-Z unit made up of Russian criminals, the Russian general staff's military intelligence and motorised rifle units.

"So now we have gained a base that will allow us to continue to develop offensive actions and liberate our land from the invaders," he wrote on Telegram.



▲ *Soldiers hold Ukrainian and other flags in the village of Klishchiivka*

The capture of the village would allow Ukrainian forces to advance more easily towards Russian lines and deliver more accurate artillery strikes, Yevlash added.

The announcement follows the recapture of the village of Andriivka on Friday. Kyiv launched its effort to wrest back territory controlled by Moscow in June after stockpiling western-supplied weapons and recruiting assault battalions.

Both settlements were substantially destroyed in months of fighting for Bakhmut.

Their liberation coincides with Zelenskiy's forthcoming visit to the US, his second since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine began in February 2022.

The advances came as two senior western figures cautioned against hopes of a swift end to the conflict.

Gen Mark Milley, the chair of the US joint chiefs of staff, said: "It will take a considerable length of time to militarily eject all 200,000-plus Russian troops out of Russian-occupied Ukraine. That's a very high bar. It's going to take a long time to do it."

The Nato secretary general, Jens Stoltenberg, also said there would be no swift end to the conflict. "Most wars last longer than expected when they first begin," he told Germany's Funke Media Group.

Additional reporting
Reuters and Agence France-Presse

Drew Barrymore delays chatshow return after writers' strike backlash



◀ *Barrymore had begun taping new episodes of her daily chatshow in New York last week*
PHOTOGRAPH: MICHAEL LOCCISANO/ GETTY IMAGES

Staff and agencies

'I wanted to do this because this is bigger than me, and there are other people's jobs on the line'
Drew Barrymore

Drew Barrymore, who drew criticism for taping new episodes of her daytime chatshow despite the continuing writers' and actors' strikes, now says she will wait until the labour issues are resolved. Hours later, another CBS chatshow, The Talk, also decided to delay its return.

"I have listened to everyone and I am making the decision to pause the show's premiere until the strike is over," Barrymore posted on Instagram on Sunday. "I have no words to express my deepest apologies to anyone I have hurt and, of course, to our incredible team who works on the show and has made it what it is today. We really tried to find our way forward and I truly hope for a resolution for the entire industry very soon."

The actor and host's initial decision to return The Drew Barrymore Show to the air yesterday – without her three union writers and with pickets outside her studio – was met with pushback on social media. Her CBS show resumed taping in New York last week and was picketed by striking writers.

"We support Drew's decision to pause the show's return and understand how complex and difficult this process has been for her," said a CBS Media Ventures spokesperson.

According to Variety, episodes of The Drew Barrymore Show that were taped last week will not go to air; instead, repeats will be screened for the time being.

Earlier in the weekend, Barrymore had posted a tearful apology in an Instagram video that has since been deleted, in which she took responsibility for wanting to bring her show back in accordance with the Screen Actors Guild and American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (Sag-Aftra) union and the Writers' Guild of America (WGA) union strike rules. "I wanted to do this because, as I said, this is bigger than me, and there are other people's jobs on the line," she said.

The Jennifer Hudson Show was due to restart yesterday, but Variety reported it had pushed back its return. The Talk has also scrapped its restart, planned for yesterday. "We will continue to evaluate plans for a new launch date," CBS said in a statement on Sunday.

Ariel Dumas, the head writer and supervising producer for The Late Show With Stephen Colbert, reacted on X, formerly Twitter. "This is really great," she wrote, saying The Drew Barrymore Show had "decided to do the right thing. I hope @TheView and others will follow suit."

As long as the hosts and guests do not discuss or promote work covered by television, theatrical or streaming contracts, they are not technically breaking the strike. That is because chatshows are covered under a separate contract from the ones over which actors and writers are striking. It also covers reality TV, sports, morning news shows, soap operas and gameshows.

Her stance had prompted the National Book Awards to uninvite Barrymore as host of November's ceremony. It rescinded her invitation "in light of the announcement that The Drew Barrymore Show will resume production".

The strikes pit the WGA and Sag-Aftra against the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers, which represents Disney, Netflix, Amazon and others.



◀ *Members of the striking WGA and Sag-Aftra unions picket outside the taping of the show*

Joy in Fiji after team's win over Australia at Rugby World Cup

Sera Sefeti
Suva

The streets of Fiji's capital filled with the sound of fireworks, car horns and cheers yesterday after the nation's rugby team delivered a historic win against Australia in the Rugby World Cup in France.

Rugby is the national sport of the Pacific nation and many sacrificed sleep for the love of the game, which aired at 3.45am local time. "It was worth it," said Joeli Bili, who watched the match in Suva with his family.

The Fijian team's triumph over the Wallabies was a relief to many, particularly after their last match ended in defeat to Wales by 32 points to 26, despite a spirited comeback from the Pacific islanders.

Fijians across the country tuned in and collective gasps and cheers could be heard as the game unfolded.

The win against Australia puts Fiji one step closer to a spot in the knockout phase of the tournament.

"It was crazy, my cousins were beating tin drums and big pots to celebrate Fiji's win, drivers were tooting their horns, and many didn't go to school or work," Nacanieli Tuilevuka, from the northern island of Vanua Levu, said.

On the main island of Viti Levu, in the rugby town of Sigatoka, Rose Nganoa and her family set their alarm clocks in time for the game.

"Everyone was just focused, all eyes were on the television, cheering for our country. We were all nervous as if we were the ones playing when Australia's points were coming closer to Fiji," Nganoa said.

In Suva, Bili said he and his family celebrated the win with the traditional drink kava. "We were so happy at home. This time around, the [kava] tasted better," he said.

Tuilevuka said Vanua Levu had "unofficially declared the day a public holiday and many are thinking of giving a piece of land to Simione Kuruvoli". Kuruvoli, a young scrum-half who has emerged as a star of the tournament, kicked a conversion and several penalties for Fiji.

In Suva, the outsourcing business Packleader Pacific had decorated its offices with a Rugby World Cup theme "to show our boys our love and support".

Jovesa Naituku, the company's learning and culture coordinator, said the World Cup win was "a boost to the start of the week … The workers came in today with a smile on their faces, a skip to their step, and really motivated."



▲ *Tevita Ikanivere and Luke Tagi celebrate Fiji's historic triumph*

'Credible' that India killed Sikh leader in Canada, says Trudeau

Leyland Cecco
Toronto

Justin Trudeau said yesterday there was "credible evidence" that India was responsible for the fatal shooting of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a prominent Canadian Sikh leader.

The allegation from Canada's prime minister is likely to further strain relations between the two countries. Yesterday, Trudeau told the House of Commons of Canada that security authorities had been investigating allegations that Nijjar's death was a state-sponsored assassination.

He said he raised the issue "in no uncertain terms" with the Indian prime minister, Narendra Modi, when the two met briefly in New Delhi last week for the G20 summit.

"Any involvement of a foreign government in the killing of a Canadian citizen on Canadian soil is an unacceptable violation of our sovereignty," he said. "Canada is a rule-of-law country. The protection of our citizens and defence of our sovereignty are fundamental."

Trudeau said the alleged killing was "contrary to the fundamental rules by which free, open and democratic societies conduct themselves".

The New Democratic party leader, Jagmeet Singh – who is also Sikh, said there must be consequences for the alleged assassination. "To hear the prime minister of Canada corroborate a potential link between a murder of a Canadian citizen on Canadian soil by a foreign government is something I could never have imagined," he said. "We will ensure that no rock is unturned, that every possible link is examined."

The Conservative party leader, Pierre Poilievre, said the allegations, if true, "represent an outrageous affront to Canada". He added: "Canadians deserve to be protected on Canadian soil. We call on the Indian government to act with utmost transparency as authorities investigate this murder, because the truth must come out."

In June, Nijjar was shot and killed outside the Guru Nanak gurdwara temple in Surrey, British Columbia. He was a strong advocate of the Khalistan movement, which seeks an independent homeland for Sikhs in India's Punjab region.

New Delhi had previously alleged Nijjar was part of a plan to murder a Hindu priest in Punjab, offering a bounty of nearly US$12,000 (£9,700). The fatal shooting of Nijjar led many to accuse India of playing a role.

The Indian high commission in Ottawa did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

India and Canada had been negotiating a trade agreement, but talks have been paused.



◀ *Rescue teams search for survivors of the Derna flooding. People are still being found alive more than a week after the catastrophe*
PHOTOGRAPH: KARIM SAHIB/AFP/GETTY

'A new lease on life' Family's miraculous survival in Derna

Islam Alatrash
Derna

Eight days after a 10-metre wall of water transformed a city of 100,000 people into a wasteland, some people are still wearing the pyjamas they woke up in that terrible night. With loved ones lost, finding new clothes, washing, sleeping and eating are not priorities for the survivors of Derna.

Libyans from all over the country have rushed to help after the city was hit by devastating floods. Among them are rescue teams from the Libyan Red Crescent, some in crimson jackets, others in white hazmat suits, gloves and masks.

Roads into Derna are filled with ambulances and trucks carrying food and water. More than a week after the catastrophe they are still finding people alive, although the dead fill the mud-washed city of ruined buildings.

One team reported on Sunday that they had rescued a family of five from a valley near the city.



◀ *Volunteers disinfect a field hospital in Derna. Libyans from all over the country have travelled to help*
PHOTOGRAPH: AYMAN AL-SAHILI/REUTERS

Ibrahim Abdulsamia, 36, and his wife somehow managed to survive despite their five-storey building being uprooted and carried away. "I never imagined we would survive, my wife and I, but it was by the grace of God that we were given a new lease on life," he said.

His wife, Fatima al-Hadi, 28, clung to their daughter when the dam burst, but the power of the water and the rubble it carried meant she was later lost.

Abdulsamia spoke with anguish, tears in his eyes, as he recounted their search for their daughter beneath the rubble.

After four days trapped under debris, the couple were found alive, thanks to Maltese rescue teams who managed to locate and extract them to safety.

What they could not have imagined was that another rescue team would find their 12-year-old daughter on the third storey, which had been carried away elsewhere by the water. She was handed over to the Red Crescent after four days without food or water.

He now feels overwhelming gratitude for being alive with his small family, seeing it as a chance for a new life despite losing so much to the floods.

Others had no chance. At least 11,300 people have died in Derna and more than 10,000 are missing, according to the Libyan Red Crescent. More than 30,000 people from the city are now homeless, UN agencies say.

Residents say the threat to the city from the crumbling dams above it had been widely known. They also blame authorities for failing to evacuate people in time.

The extensive destruction of the city highlights the fragility of Libya's situation, a country rich in oil but divided between two competing administrations, each backed by armed militias for nearly a decade.

The conflicts have persisted since the 2011 Nato-backed Arab spring uprising that toppled the late leader Muammar Gaddafi.

Derna is in the east, and until 2019 was held by a succession of Islamist militant groups including branches of al-Qaida and Islamic State. Libyan governments and foreign nations have collaborated to aid those affected by the floods but progress has been painfully slow.

Bridges, roads and other infrastructure have been severely damaged, isolating the city. Electricity has been cut off, and the first relief convoys only reached the area late on Tuesday last week.

'After the tragic events in Derna, we must now address the issue of other Libyan dams'

Ali Abu Zeid
Political analyst

"After the tragic events witnessed in the Derna disaster, we must now seriously address the issue of other dams in Libya to prevent consequences we cannot bear," said Ali Abu Zeid, a local political analyst.

Among these is al-Khums valley dam, which he said posed a real threat to the city of al-Khums, and the Madjannin valley dam, which threatens large population centres in southern Tripoli. It is crucial now to open a discussion about all the dams in Libya and take the necessary precautions, said Abu Zeid.

Hopes of finding survivors in Derna diminish every day. Specialised teams are working tirelessly, and local officials have warned of the potential need to evacuate the city entirely or partially to prevent the spread of diseases. The sea continues to wash up more bodies every day.

As the death toll and the number of missing people rises, calls from within Derna and other areas for more vehicles, equipment and rescue teams and services to aid in the search are growing louder.

Meanwhile, people wait anxiously in the rubble-filled streets for any good news they can cling to, hoping Derna may one day return to what it once was.

Additional reporting **Reuters**

Musk suggests Soros foundation seeking to 'destroy civilisation'

Hibaq Farah

Elon Musk has accused George Soros's foundation of wanting to destroy western civilisation, as the Twitter owner prepares to meet the Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, in California.

Musk made the comment in reply to a post on Twitter, which has been rebranded as X, by a user sharing footage of people arriving on the Italian island of Lampedusa from north Africa that referred to a "George Soros led invasion" of Europe.

Musk responded: "The Soros organization appears to want nothing less than the destruction of western civilization."

Soros, a Hungarian-American businessman and philanthropist, has been the subject of multiple antisemitic conspiracy theories. His Open Society Foundations network, which supports civil society groups including some working on issues affecting the safety and wellbeing of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, is a regular target of the far right.

The US-based Anti-Defamation League (ADL), which campaigns against antisemitism and bigotry, is among civil rights groups that have accused Musk of amplifying antisemitism on his platform, which he denies.

Musk has threatened to sue the ADL and accused it of trying to "kill" Twitter by "falsely accusing it and me of being antisemitic".



▲ *Elon Musk in New York, where the UN general assembly is taking place*

He was scheduled to meet Netanyahu yesterday for talks that both men said would focus on artificial intelligence technology, and not on the ADL.

However, a Washington Post report last week said the meeting was part of a campaign by Musk's Jewish friends and allies to stave off mounting criticism surrounding the increase in antisemitic speech on Twitter.

Groups including the Center for Countering Digital Hate and the ADL have issued findings that the volume of hate speech on Twitter has grown under Musk's stewardship.

Additional reporting **Reuters**

FTSE 100	All share	Dow Indl	Nikkei 225	£/€	£/$
-58.44	-37.50	+90.21	Closed	1.1597	1.2380
7652.94	4152.91	34708.45	33533.09	-0.0025	-0.0016

Business

AI boom may not have positive outcome, UK watchdog warns

Dan Milmo
Global technology editor

People should not assume a positive outcome from the artificial intelligence boom, the UK's competition watchdog has warned, citing risks including a proliferation of false information, fraud and fake reviews as well as high prices for using the technology.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) said people and businesses could benefit from a new generation of AI systems but dominance by entrenched players and flouting of consumer protection law posed a number of potential threats.

The CMA made the warning in an initial review of foundation models, the technology that underpins AI tools such as ChatGPT and image generators such as Stable Diffusion.

The emergence of ChatGPT in particular has triggered a debate over the impact of generative AI - tools that produce convincing text, image and voice outputs from typed human prompts - on the economy by eliminating white-collar jobs in areas such as law, IT and the media, as well as the potential for mass-producing disinformation targeting voters.

The CMA chief executive, Sarah Cardell, said the speed at which AI was becoming a part of everyday life for people and businesses was "dramatic", with the potential for making millions of everyday tasks easier as well as boosting productivity.

However, Cardell warned that people should not assume a beneficial outcome. "We can't take a positive future for granted," she said in a statement. "There remains a real risk that the use of AI develops in a way that undermines consumer trust or is dominated by a few players who exert market power that prevents the full benefits being felt across the economy."

The CMA defines foundation models as "large, general machine-learning models that are trained on vast amounts of data and can be adapted to a wide range of tasks and operations" including powering chatbots, image generators and Microsoft's 365 office products.

The watchdog estimates about 160 foundation models have been released by companies including Google, Meta and Microsoft, as well as new AI firms such as the ChatGPT developer OpenAI and the UK-based Stability AI, which funded the Stable Diffusion image generator.

The CMA added that many firms already had a presence in two or more key aspects of the AI model ecosystem, with big AI developers such as Google, Microsoft and Amazon owning vital infrastructure for producing and distributing foundation models such as data centres, servers and data repositories.

The regulator also said it would monitor the impact of investments by big tech firms in AI developers, such as Microsoft in OpenAI and the Google parent Alphabet in Anthropic, with both deals including the provision of cloud computing services - an important resource for the sector.

It is essential, the CMA said, that the AI market does not fall into the hands of a small number of companies, with a potential short-term consequence that consumers are exposed to significant levels of false information, AI-enabled fraud and fake reviews.



High flyers Student aircraft pilots at Banasthali University near Jaipur. India has the highest percentage of female pilots in the world.

PHOTOGRAPH: ELKE SCHOLIERS/AFP/GETTY

Ministers pledge strict security checks for Sizewell C investors

Alex Lawson

Prospective investors in the proposed Sizewell C nuclear power station in Suffolk will undergo "strict national security checks", the government said yesterday as it formally kicked off a hunt for outside investment.

The project, led by the French energy company EDF and backed by the UK government, aims to produce 3.2 gigawatts of electricity - enough to power about 6m homes - and was approved in July last year.

The newly appointed energy security secretary, Claire Coutinho, opened applications yesterday for interested parties to register their interest in investing in Sizewell C.

The government and EDF, which is backed by the French state, have each taken a 20% stake in the project.

Ministers hope the Suffolk plant will mark the next phase of a planned nuclear renaissance in the UK and have so far pumped in £700m.

They have also made £511m available to continue project development and prepare the site for construction, before the planned equity raising for the project. Estimates on its overall build time and cost, expected to be at least £20bn, have varied significantly.

Funding for the scheme faced upheaval after the government forced out the Chinese state-backed nuclear company CGN, which initially had a 20% stake, amid security concerns over Beijing's further involvement in UK nuclear energy.

CGN has part-funded Hinkley Point C in Somerset, a sister project to Sizewell C based on the same designs.

Investors in the United Arab Emirates, Australia and Saudi Arabia have reportedly already been approached.

Sorrell's S4 Capital cuts forecast and jobs as clients tighten belts

Mark Sweney

The digital marketing group S4 Capital, established by the veteran advertising boss Sir Martin Sorrell, has cut almost 500 jobs in the face of a plunge in spending from clients fearful of an impending recession.

Shares in the company, founded after Sorrell's acrimonious departure from the advertising company WPP in 2018, fell by 30% to a record low after it said it expected revenues to shrink and profit margins to narrow, although those losses later eased and it closed about 22% down, stripping about £120m off its market value.

"We had a very mixed first half of the year, reflecting challenging global macroeconomic conditions and consequent fears of recession, which resulted in client caution to commit and extended sales cycles, particularly for larger projects," said Sorrell, the executive chair of S4 Capital, which has now cut its annual forecast for the second time in as many months.

S4 Capital has a significant dependence on technology clients, which accounted for just under 50% of total revenues last year, but are now reining in spending. The company said it had cut the number of employees from 9,041 to 8,550 at the end of June compared with the same point last year.

The group said inflation in staff costs and higher IT costs meant more job cuts were looming and the firm would "continue to take action".

Its content practice, which makes creative campaigns for clients that run across digital platforms, saw profits plunge by more than 70% like-for-like in the first half compared with last year.

S4 Capital said it expected total group revenues for the year to fall by 1%, compared with a previous forecast of 2.5% growth, while profit margins have been lowered to 12%, from 14.5% previously.

"We expect the year as usual to be weighted to the second half, especially the fourth quarter," said Sorrell. "Stimulated, in particular, by increased seasonal levels of clients' activity, and our artificial intelligence initiatives, and the use cases we are developing with our clients."

The company said that like-for-like revenue growth among its top 20 clients was still up by 8.9% year-on-year and it still expects to outperform rivals and return its profit margins to above 20% over the longer term.



Cash back? Why we're returning to notes and coins

Clea Skopeliti

Cash payments are making a comeback in the UK for the first time in a decade, data shows, as people's disposable incomes are squeezed by the cost of living crisis.

Reversing years of decline, the banking body UK Finance said last week many had returned to physical money in order to budget and that cash payments in 2022 had increased to 6.4bn, up by 7%.

Ann Broom, 65, began using notes and coins again about a year ago, after decades of relying on her debit card. Broom, who retired in 2015, but has recently taken a part-time job cleaning holiday homes in Anglesey (Ynys Môn), turned to cash to better track her spending.

"I've always used a debit card for groceries … but when things started to get so expensive, I thought: it's so easy to swipe or contactless - I need to have a look at what I'm spending. I decided that using a debit card was a bit like using invisible money," she says, adding that she still uses online banking.

When she withdraws her pension, Broom divides her month's money by the week. "Using actual money is much more tangible," she says. She then saves any left over cash or spends it on treats for her granddaughter.

In some areas cash is still king. Christine Xavier-Gordon, 70, says some stores in her village in County Durham do not accept debit cards. "Cash is used quite a lot in our former mining town. The fish and chips shop and the bakery accept cash only, and there is a £5 minimum spend requirement at the newsagents," she says. Xavier-Gordon, who is retired, finds online banking a handy way to monitor her outgoings. "I find it easy to keep track of money by paying with card - I can download my bank statements and see exactly what I've spent. But I understand that some older people may struggle with it - my dad had a little book that he wrote everything down in."



▲ *Ann Broom, 65, finds it easier to track her spending if she uses cash*

Others, however, only use cash to cover specific payments. Sho, 30, says that in London he only ever uses cash when paying to get his hair cut. "I am yet to visit an afro barbershop in London that takes cards. As such, I always have between £5 and £20 in my wallet."

The capital has seen the biggest decline in cash machines since 2018. "The ATM I used to use at the newsagents near my house disappeared about six months ago, which was really annoying as it means I have to travel farther to get cash out to cut my hair," says Sho, who works at a charity. Although he almost exclusively makes payments using cards, Sho says keeping physical money in circulation is important. "Haircuts are the only payment I make regularly that still require cash, but I wouldn't want to do away with cash - it would make things difficult for older people in particular."



▲ *Sho, 30, uses cash to pay for his haircuts as they do not take cards*

Despite being surrounded by technology, Adam, 36, sometimes turns to physical money for security reasons. "As a thirtysomething, I grew up around ever-changing technology - I have a smartphone, smartwatch, all with touch pay. However, I still rely on cash and even sometimes go out of my way to get some cash from an increasingly rare cashpoint machine," he says.

The ICT engineer from Kent says: "I don't trust some shops and businesses with my card payment information - it's [possible] to clone cards using a chip and pin machine and I have nearly fallen victim to a scam before."

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◀ Woking council's total borrowing was found to be 127 times its core spending power in 2021. Now, local residents face cuts to sports facilities and public toilets

PHOTOGRAPH: LEON NEAL/GETTY

Broke Britain Central government must share blame for council woes

Nils Pratley

Imagine a situation in which most companies on the London Stock Exchange had failed to file their accounts on time, with several behind on their paperwork by a number of years. Then further imagine that one explanation for the delays was that the UK doesn't have enough auditors with the right skills, and that the body that used to do most of the work was abolished in 2015. Then assume that a handful of these companies were simultaneously confessing to hundreds of millions of pounds of writedowns on property speculation. There would be uproar.

The above parallel, however, roughly describes the state of affairs in local government in England. Only 12% of audits for 2022 were completed on time and, even with a subsequent push to catch up, the tally stood at only 27% at the last count. Overall, 520 audits, from a total of about 400 local authorities, are delayed, Lee Rowley, the local government minister, told MPs last month. Stating the bleedin' obvious, he called the position "clearly unacceptable".

Meanwhile, fears about the financial horrors that may emerge grow with every fresh study. A report by the credit rating agency Moody's last week took a cold look at local government finances after the string of section 114 notices (in effect, declarations of bankruptcy) from Birmingham, Croydon, Slough, Thurrock and Woking and concluded that more authorities will fail "as weak governance amplifies the impact of rate cycles". It sounds a safe prediction.

Rishi Sunak, instead of trying to make political capital out of the woes of Labour-led Birmingham, should recognise first that some of the worst blow-ups happened under Tory regimes, and second that central government is hardly blameless.

The backdrop to this crisis is well-known: local authorities' central funding was squeezed post-2010 to the degree that spending power fell by 17.5% in real terms in a decade. In response, many councils took the hint-cum-encouragement to go forth and speculate, which usually meant borrowing to invest in commercial property (Thurrock scorched itself in solar farms). Critically, local authorities were assisted in the borrowing binge by oodles of easy loans from the Treasury-backed Public Works Loans Board.

Some of the activity now looks absurdly reckless: Woking council's total borrowing was 127 times its core spending power in 2021, an almost laughable ratio. But a compounding factor is surely the absence of what Moody's means by "governance". Where was the scrutiny? Local authorities were advised to "have regard to" a prudential framework from 2013 that emphasised sensible things like security and liquidity when borrowing, but "they were not legally obliged to do so", says the report.

That situation existed until November 2020 when borrowing rules were tightening, probably because the Treasury was alarmed by the hit to commercial property values in the pandemic and the concentration of lending. Forty-nine local authorities, or 14% of the sector, have accounted for 80% of the £7.6bn spent on commercial investments by councils since 2016.

But it should have been common sense, at the very outset, to realise that stiffer financial safeguards and scrutiny would be needed. Commercial property development is not like inspecting planning applications. Councillors should have worked that out for themselves. Instead of trimming finance departments, as many did under budget pressures, they should have been adding to them to deal with the new complexities. Yet the scrapping in 2015 of the Audit Commission, the body that used to oversee local authorities' audits, also looks in retrospect to have been a key moment in the emerging financial disaster.

The commission's auditors were moved into the private sector, a move that Eric Pickles, the local government secretary at the time, claimed would "pass power down to people, replace bureaucratic accountability with democratic accountability and save the taxpayer £50m a year". That statement now reads as a grade A example of a false economy. Bureaucratic accountability, it turns out, is no bad thing if it ensures that audits happen promptly and external scrutiny takes place.

The UK is not alone in suffering from a lack of auditors in the specialised and low-fee field of local government, but the private sector has notably failed to fill the gaps. A public accounts committee report in June said there were fewer than 100 key audit partners in the UK registered to perform local audits. That dire situation, almost everybody agrees, has developed partly because responsibilities were fragmented across about half a dozen bodies.

The government's belated attempt to clear the auditing backlog at least recognises the problem. The Financial Reporting Council (FRC) will be given the role of "shadow system leader". Why shadow? Because the job is earmarked for the intended new overarching Audit, Reporting and Governance Authority, the constantly delayed successor to the FRC. The "system leader" model sounds sensible to house oversight, standards and enforcement in one place, but it also had merit in 2020 when recommended in an independent review by Sir Tony Redmond, the former president of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. Even now, the FRC is still awaiting its official remit letter from ministers.

For the costs of slow auditing and insufficient oversight, go back to the Moody's report. "Financial mismanagement and governance failings have been widespread in most of the local authorities that have issued section 114 notices," it said. "In Woking, Croydon and Thurrock, external auditors and government-appointed commissioners have noted failures in financial controls, very limited scrutiny of investment decisions and a lack of in-house commercial investment expertise." At Slough, auditors were completing a 2019 audit in 2023, which "demonstrates the weakness in its audit evidence".

To repeat, this long-running story has multiple causes. Appalling decision-making by individual councils and naive councillors undoubtedly lies at the heart of the worst failures. And the pandemic cranked up existing pressures. But those local residents facing cuts to sports facilities and public toilets (Woking), or a 15% increase in council tax (Croydon), should reserve a portion of their fury for central government. It oversaw loose borrowing rules and tolerated for too long an under-resourced auditing setup. The combination usually spells trouble.

17.5%

Drop in local councils' spending power after being squeezed by central government from 2010

520

The number of audits, from a total of about 400 local authorities, that are behind schedule



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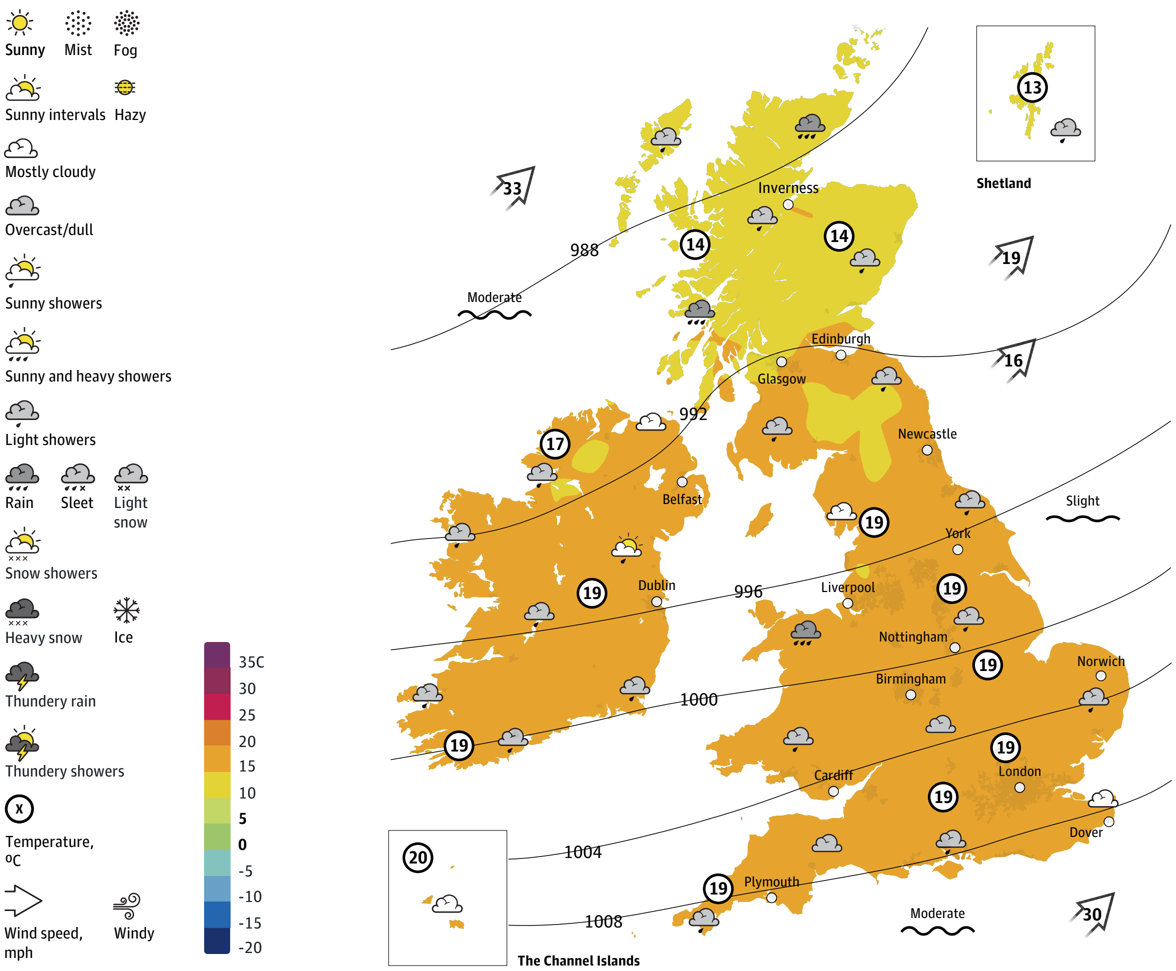
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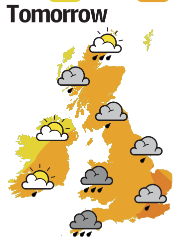
Weather
Tuesday 19 September 2023

UK and Ireland Noon today

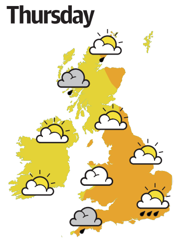


Forecast

Low 15 High 18
Tomorrow



Low 8 High 16
Thursday



Carbon count

Daily atmospheric CO_2 readings from Mauna Loa, Hawaii (ppm):

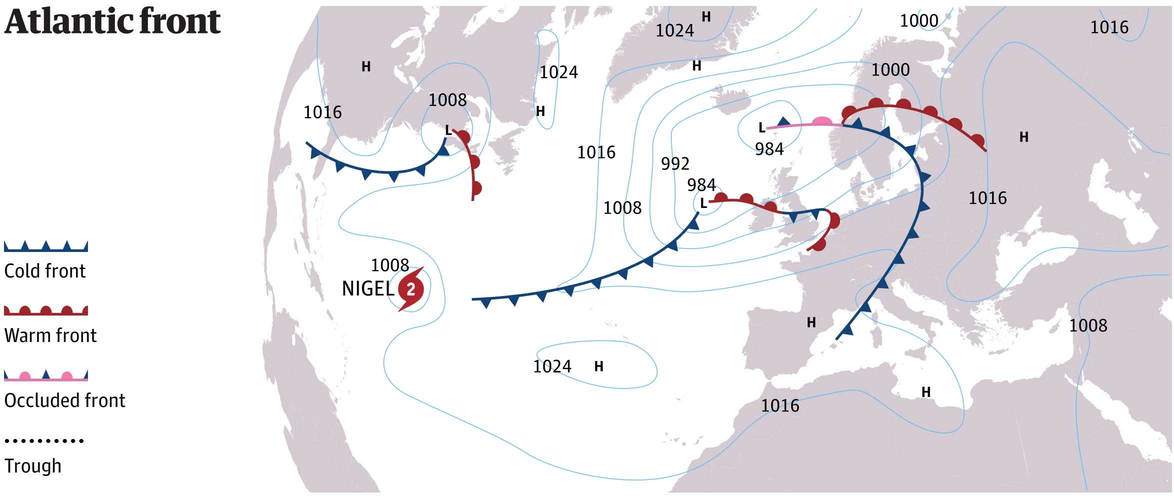
Latest	
17 Sep 2023	418.72
Weekly average	
10 Sep 2023	418.52
18 Sep 2022	416.15
18 Sep 2013	393.52
Pre-industrial base	*280*
Safe level	*350*

Source: NOAA-ESRL

Around the UK

	Lows and highs		Precipitation	Air pollution
London	17	19	25%	Low
Manchester	15	18	75%	Low
Edinburgh	14	16	75%	Low
Belfast	14	17	80%	Low
Birmingham	16	19	60%	Low
Brighton	17	19	65%	Low
Bristol	16	19	55%	Low
Cardiff	17	18	65%	Low
Newcastle	15	17	70%	Low
Penzance	17	19	60%	Low

Atlantic front

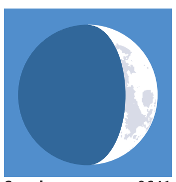


High tides

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Aberdeen	**0418**	4.2m	**1642**	4.0m
Avonmouth	**1023**	12.0m	**2234**	12.1m
Barrow	**0215**	8.9m	**1437**	8.7m
Belfast	**0153**	3.5m	**1408**	3.3m
Cobh	**0829**	3.8m	**2043**	3.9m
Cromer	**0919**	4.9m	**2155**	4.7m
Dover	**0146**	6.4m	**1403**	6.6m
Dublin	**0226**	3.9m	**1449**	3.8m
Galway	**0819**	4.7m	**2028**	4.6m
Greenock	**0322**	3.6m	**1551**	3.3m
Harwich	**0245**	3.8m	**1450**	3.8m
Holyhead	**0111**	5.4m	**1331**	5.3m
Hull	**0922**	7.2m	**2146**	7.0m
Leith	**0542**	5.3m	**1805**	5.2m
Liverpool	**0155**	8.9m	**1415**	8.7m
London Bridge	**0455**	6.7m	**1711**	6.8m
Lossiemouth	**0246**	4.0m	**1508**	3.8m
Milford Haven	**0918**	6.6m	**2132**	6.6m
Newquay	**0810**	6.6m	**2024**	6.6m
North Shields	**0622**	5.0m	**1847**	4.7m
Oban	**0843**	3.7m	**2050**	3.8m
Penzance	**0742**	5.2m	**1955**	5.2m
Plymouth	**0859**	5.1m	**2107**	5.1m
Portsmouth	**0219**	4.5m	**1443**	4.5m
Southport	**0129**	8.6m	**1342**	8.4m
Stornoway	**0950**	4.4m	**2155**	4.5m
Weymouth	**0909**	1.2m	**2121**	1.2m
Whitby	**0659**	5.4m	**1923**	5.2m
Wick	**0214**	3.4m	**1436**	3.2m
Workington	**0221**	8.0m	**1440**	7.8m

Sun & Moon



Sun rises	0641
Sun sets	1906
Moon rises	1135
Moon sets	2025
First Quarter	22 Sept

Forecasts and graphics provided by **AccuWeather** ©2023

Lighting up

Belfast	1932 to 0706
Birm'ham	1913 to 0649
Brighton	1906 to 0643
Bristol	1917 to 0653
Carlisle	1919 to 0652
Cork	1940 to 0716
Dublin	1932 to 0707
Glasgow	1926 to 0658
Harlech	1923 to 0658
Inverness	1925 to 0656
London	1906 to 0642
M'chester	1916 to 0651
Newcastle	1914 to 0648
Norwich	1901 to 0637
Penzance	1928 to 0705

Weather tracker

The spring heatwave in Australia is forecast to continue, with record temperatures expected for inland areas of South Australia, New South Wales and Victoria. In Sydney, temperatures have already reached 34.2C, more than 12C higher than the September average. The Bureau of Meteorology said that temperatures could possibly climb as high as 16C above the average. The predicted conditions are linked to an El Niño weather event.

In the US, the National Hurricane Center has named its 14th storm of this Atlantic hurricane season as Tropical Storm Nigel. This follows Hurricane Lee, which caused power cuts and displaced thousands from their homes last week in eastern Canada and Maine before clearing into the Atlantic.

The National Hurricane Center flagged the possibility of Nigel becoming a category 3 hurricane with winds of 111mph or more. The exact path of Nigel remains uncertain, though it is currently moving away from the US. There is the possibility that the remnants of Nigel and Lee will affect the UK later this week.

In Brazil, heavy rain is expected across the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul this week.

Matt Williams *MetDesk*

Around the world

Algiers	29	Lisbon	26
Ams'dam	18	Madrid	25
Athens	28	Malaga	26
Auckland	18	Melb'rne	27
B Aires	17	Mexico C	26
Bangkok	35	Miami	31
Barcelona	26	Milan	28
Basra	43	Mombasa	30
Beijing	27	Moscow	19
Berlin	21	Mumbai	31
Bermuda	29	N Orleans	32
Brussels	19	Nairobi	26
Budapest	26	New Delhi	33
C'hagen	18	New York	22
Cairo	32	Oslo	16
Cape Town	17	Paris	21
Chicago	20	Perth	20
Corfu	30	Prague	22
Dakar	33	Reykjavik	12
Dhaka	31	Rio de J	29
Dublin	19	Rome	28
Florence	30	Shanghai	34
Gibraltar	23	Singapore	31
H Kong	32	Stockh'm	16
Harare	29	Strasb'g	23
Helsinki	18	Sydney	33
Istanbul	27	Tel Aviv	30
Jo'burg	26	Tenerife	28
K Lumpur	33	Tokyo	32
K'mandu	30	Toronto	21
Kabul	29	Vancouv'r	16
Kingston	34	Vienna	25
Kolkata	30	Warsaw	21
L Angeles	25	Wash'ton	26
Lagos	30	Well'ton	17
Lima	21	Zurich	22

Football

WSL wants to be first billion-pound women's league

Page 37 →

Racing

Nicky Henderson on wonder horse Constitution Hill

Interview, page 34 →



Sport



▲ *Ange Postecoglou has lifted Tottenham to second in the table with 13 goals in five games, lifting the mood around the club*
STEPHEN POND/GETTY IMAGES

Earning his Spurs

Pastor Postecoglou shows importance of journey even if you never reach heaven



Jonathan Liew

A few years ago, around the same time people started getting extremely animated by things such as net spends and expected goals, there came a school of emerging thought that challenged the traditional narrative of footballing performance, arguing – in effect – that the influence of a manager was vastly overstated. Matches are won by the best players, so the hypothesis went, and the best players cost money, and thus a club's wage bill was a far more reliable predictor of success than whichever bloke happened to be sitting on a padded car seat in the dugout.

In this reading, the era of the all-powerful manager was gone, if it ever really existed. Football's centre of gravity had shifted away from the manager's office towards the sporting director, the medical department, the boardroom and the fund markets. And so the game's enduring fixation on managers was an outdated affectation, a fundamental misunderstanding of how the game itself functioned. Austere academic articles were commissioned on the subject. Long, data-heavy books were written and occasionally even purchased.

As a piece of empirical analysis, the theory of the powerless manager made sense. It explained why managers would often enjoy a "bounce" after joining a new club, before regressing to the mean. It explained why a manager might enjoy success at one club before failing at the next: because none of this means anything, right? Most of all it seemed to explain how Zinedine Zidane could lead one of the world's richest clubs to three Champions Leagues without ever actually seeming to do anything at all.

But as with many theories, there was a large gaping hole in the middle of it. Perhaps "blind spot" is a more accurate term. Because essentially it comes down to what you regard as the ultimate meaning of football, the reason it is worth your time. Is it the pursuit of performance, or a ritual and a rite? Is it primarily a destination, or a journey? Is it defined by victory and defeat, or the feelings it creates along the way? The reason for posing these questions here is that in only one of these realities is Ange Postecoglou a brilliant manager.

Maybe this sounds a little like damnation by faint praise. But if in fact we subscribe to the theory that the manager is a marginal influence, then it must follow that there are hardly any brilliant managers in the world. Pep Guardiola probably, Jürgen Klopp maybe, and everyone else is sort of bobbing around at varying levels of competence. Postecoglou's own career, from Australia to Japan to Scotland, seems to have oscillated between periods of mediocrity and periods of clear success. Technically and tactically, he seems to know what he's doing. But then so does virtually everyone these days.

And this is the intractable difficulty in trying to assess the worth of a manager. In an age where everyone is playing roughly the same kind of high-tempo vertical football, sending their scouts to the same places, working off roughly the same sets of data, where everyone has pristine training pitches and a hydrotherapy pool, where exactly is the space for a coach to be a meaningful point of difference? It boils down, in large part, to stories and projections. To salesmanship, communication, oratory, personal relationships. To how you can make people feel.

I'll be honest: I didn't really *get* Postecoglou when he arrived in England. Here was a guy clearly very impressive in press conferences, whose Celtic teams had played attractive football while falling short in Europe, whose immense and often devotional appeal seemed to stem more from how he carried himself than anything he had tangibly achieved. It took a while for the penny to drop that far from being window dressing, this is actually the stuff of which modern management is made. Particularly at Tottenham, where the prospects for an actual trophy are scarce and there will always be at least six richer clubs out there. Spurs didn't need another military strategist or surly technocrat. They needed a pastor.

> *Tottenham didn't need another strategist or technocrat*

And when Postecoglou holds court, you listen. He quips in short digestible phrases, often employs contrast for effect. "They go through enough pain, they deserve some happiness," he said of Tottenham's fans at the weekend. Like all the best preachers, faith and suffering lie at the heart of his message. He understands the power of rivalry and would frequently throw Celtic fans a little red meat with a dig at Rangers. His intolerance of VAR ("it's ruining the football experience") and xG ("the one that gets me is XL, that's all my clothes") establish his authenticity and common touch. He says "mate" a lot, talks about his fantasy football team, the podcasts he listens to, going to the movies with his kids. The subtext is one any cleric will be innately familiar with: look, I'm just like you. I know your struggle. But I've also seen the promised land. Mate, let's go there together.

Spurs will always have the income and players to finish somewhere around the top six. That part almost takes care of itself. But as a famous self-help manual once almost said, man cannot survive on gritty 1-0 wins at Fulham alone. "It's not always just about the destination," Postecoglou says. "There's nothing wrong with enjoying the journey."

Football is a dark and confusing and corrupted place. The devil is everywhere you look. But here's Ange, putting a big meaty arm around your shoulder and telling you it's going to be OK. In a sport without clear destinations, where the big prizes have already been sold, perhaps the journey is all there is left.

'Constitution Hill is different. It was like Pegasus'



▼ *Nicky Henderson alongside Constitution Hill at his stables*
TOM JENKINS/THE GUARDIAN

The big interview
Nicky Henderson

Unbeaten hurdler has drawn comparisons with Arkle and Sprinter Sacre but his legendary trainer knows the Gold Cup will decide horse's standing

Donald McRae



'We're back in the same boat," Nicky Henderson says with a smile and a sigh as he considers the immense pressure bearing down on him while he plots the future of Constitution Hill, a seemingly miraculous horse whose next appearances on the track will transfix National Hunt racing. Constitution Hill has built a winning aura which could match and even surpass the hold that Sprinter Sacre, another of Henderson's great horses, had on the racing public 10 years ago.

"When Sprinter was in his heyday," Henderson continues, "there wasn't a horse in the world who could have beaten him. Anything but sheer brilliance, anything less than a win by 20 lengths, was a catastrophe. People went to see him because he was phenomenal. With Constitution Hill, the amazing thing is that he's only had eight races over hurdles. So it's been lovely how quickly the racing world latched on to him."

Timeform, which provides the most authoritative comparison of racing through the eras, ranks Sprinter Sacre as the third greatest steeplechaser in history, behind Flyingbolt and Arkle who won three successive Gold Cups in the 1960s. Yet Michael Dickinson, who trained the first five home in the 1983 Gold Cup, describes Constitution Hill as the best horse he has ever seen in the air and the greatest horse since Arkle.

Henderson nods but then says: "I don't like comparing them. Of course it's flattering because Arkle was obviously the greatest horse I can remember. I was fascinated by Arkle."

But Henderson, aged 72, knows any meaningful comparison with Arkle can only begin if and when Constitution Hill begins jumping fences and heads towards the Gold Cup. In 2022, Constitution Hill won his first Cheltenham Festival race by 22 lengths in the Supreme Novice Hurdle. At the Festival last year, while the Irish turned the rest of the four days into an emerald procession, he again produced the standout performance in the Champion Hurdle.

In a fascinating new book about Henderson, My Life in 12 Horses, Kate Johnson writes about that race: "He crossed the hurdles like an arrow: long, low, whip-crack quick … Constitution Hill accelerated around the final turn, powered to four or five lengths clear for his motionless jockey, as they left the field in his wake. The sun caught his quarters, his tail streamed behind him, his mane lifted in the wind, he was flying, storming the hill, untouchable, magnificent, other. He passed the post, first by what seemed to be a comfortable, almost chosen, nine lengths. It was that rarest of races, a no-contest thriller."

Henderson leans forward in his lounge at his Seven Barrows yard near Lambourn in Berkshire. His filmy eyes, which in recent years he had feared would turn blind, are suddenly glittering. "The cauldron of Cheltenham is a very good test of a horse's mentality and a lot of them can't cope. But this horse is very different. Even with Sprinter we used earplugs at Cheltenham. It stopped the atmosphere getting to him. But [Constitution Hill] never needs them."

Constitution Hill is so serene that he was dozing when Henderson checked on him on the morning of the Champion Hurdle. "He's always sleeping. He's got this ridiculous, wonderful temperament and his greatest asset is his mind. Nothing bothers him. He works, eats, sleeps. Works, eats, sleeps. The same routine day in, day out."

> *'You're certainly not going to give up when you've got this type of horse. I love it'*

Once he is racing he seems to fly - so much so that, at the last Cheltenham hurdle, the Irish jockey Patrick Mullins saw Constitution Hill lift his front legs two inches while in the air. "The horse thought he had come up too soon," Henderson says, "but I'm sure there was a shadow on the hurdle. He came up on the shadow, not the hurdle, and thought, 'Aarrgghh! I'm not getting there!' So, like a plane in mid-flight, he soared up." Henderson shakes his head at such jumping power. "It was like Pegasus."

Has he schooled the horse over fences? "No, but only because of the ground. He is fit enough to do so but I really don't want to do it on the all-weather [track]. We'll discuss it over the next few days and see. Jumping probably isn't the issue. Stamina may be. That's where the big question comes."

Constitution Hill could replicate the feat of Henderson's first great horse, See You Then, who won three consecutive Champion Hurdles from 1985 to 1987. But Henderson knows true greatness could be measured if Constitution Hill eventually becomes only the second horse after Dawn Run to win the Champion Hurdle and the Gold Cup.

"He could have the stamina," Henderson says when asked if the horse will cope with a gruelling race. Yet Constitution Hill has never had to push himself and that simple observation encourages Henderson to exclaim: "Exactly. Absolutely."

Henderson seems sanguine as he prepares for more expectation with Constitution Hill. It helps that this horse is laid back rather than a peacock like Sprinter. Even when he bought him for Michael Buckley, on the recommendation of his previous owner, Barry Geraghty, Henderson's stable jockey for years, Constitution Hill "was the slowest walker and the slowest trotter I ever saw. There was nothing about him whatsoever."

At Seven Barrows, Henderson complained to Geraghty that the horse was "a yak". But then Constitution Hill began to race and arrow over the hurdles. His victory at Cheltenham last year meant "he was our ninth Champion Hurdler", Henderson says. "Binocular, Buveur d'Air, See You Then were very, very good horses and fantastic hurdlers. But this horse uses the hurdle to make two lengths, not lose any."

The Gold Cup is run over three miles and 2½ furlongs, containing 22 draining fences, and the desire of the racing public will be to see Constitution Hill pushed towards that goal. So Henderson is caught again between the pressure of giddy anticipation, his conflicted responsibilities towards racing and the horse's welfare. In the end the latter always wins. But hope rises that Constitution Hill will be ready to jump fences in a series of races which eventually leads to a Gold Cup tilt. If he could then win the greatest race of them all it would be a landmark that returns the sport briefly back to the mainstream.

Henderson and his wife, Sophie, will leave the yard straight after this interview to travel to London for his latest check with an eye specialist. While admitting he can barely see anything out of one eye, he cackles that he can see all he needs out of the other one. His fears of retirement have been banished and he smiles when asked if he will train into his 80s.

"They've helped my eyes a lot and I've got nothing else to do. You're certainly not going to give up when you've got this type of horse. There's no way. I love it and it's a great game with highs and lows. I was champion trainer when I was 67 and I said there were bound to have been older champions like Fulke Walwyn [who trained four Gold Cup winners and finally retired after 40 years in 1986] and Fred Winter [the eight-time champion trainer who was assisted by Henderson in the 1970s].

"John Randall, who does the Racing Post stats, looked up all the champion trainers. He said: 'Well done, Nicky, you've broken the record. The bad news is you've only beaten your *own* record. You broke it three years ago.' Fulke Walwyn and Fred Winter were legends to me. So it's a bit humbling."

Henderson has been champion trainer six times, winning his last title in 2020, and he has been behind only Paul Nicholls since then. We amble out for a few more photos. Constitution Hill, having been with us earlier, and showing a little pre-season belly after a lazy summer, is back in his box. The hard work resumes soon and all eyes will be fixed on Henderson's wonder horse this season.

Leaning against a stable door, Henderson gazes across the yard with his one good eye and reflects for a moment when asked what lessons he has learned from the horses which have consumed his life. "Don't ever be surprised," he eventually says. "I've reached a point where everything, good or bad, is possible. You've got to be adventurous sometimes but I'm probably quite cautious because you never know what's round the next corner. There are absolutely no certainties in life or racing. Be prepared for everything."

My Life in 12 Horses by Nicky Henderson with Kate Johnson is published by Pitch

Results and fixtures

Football

PREMIER LEAGUE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Manchester City	5	5	0	0	14	3	+11	**15**
Tottenham	5	4	1	0	13	5	+8	**13**
Liverpool	5	4	1	0	12	4	+8	**13**
Arsenal	5	4	1	0	9	4	+5	**13**
Brighton	5	4	0	1	15	7	+8	**12**
West Ham	5	3	1	1	10	7	+3	**10**
Aston Villa	5	3	0	2	11	10	+1	**9**
Nottingham Forest	5	2	1	2	7	7	0	**7**
Crystal Palace	5	2	1	2	6	7	-1	**7**
Fulham	5	2	1	2	5	10	-5	**7**
Brentford	5	1	3	1	8	6	+2	**6**
Newcastle	5	2	0	3	8	7	+1	**6**
Manchester United	5	2	0	3	6	10	-4	**6**
Chelsea	5	1	2	2	5	5	0	**5**
Bournemouth	5	0	3	2	4	8	-4	**3**
Wolves	5	1	0	4	5	11	-6	**3**
Sheffield United	5	0	1	4	5	9	-4	**1**
Everton	5	0	1	4	2	9	-7	**1**
Burnley	4	0	1	3	4	12	-8	**1**
Luton	4	0	0	4	2	10	-8	**0**

Nottingham Forest (0) **1** Hudson-Odoi 61
Burnley (1) **1** Amdouni 41
28,958

LA LIGA
Granada 2 Girona 4

SERIE A
Salernitana 0 Torino 3; Verona 0 Bologna 0

Cricket

SECOND YOUTH TEST (third day of four)
Northampton Australia U19 396 (RR Hicks 131, H Singh 100, CN Frendo 53 no, HT Dixon 51) & 152-4 (HT Dixon 78no). England U19 408 (DC Kelly 88, NRM Thain 88). Australia lead England by 140 runs with six second-innings wickets remaining.

Tennis

WTA GUADALAJARA OPEN AKRON (Zapopan, Mexico)
First round: K Pliskova (Cz) bt E Shibahara (Jpn) 7-5 6-2; **L Fernandez** (Can) bt A Muhammad (US) 6-1 6-3; **S Stephens** (US) bt A Li (US) 7-5 6-4; **T Townsend** (US) bt A Tomljanovic (Aus) 7-6 (7-3) 6-4; **E Bouchard** (Can) bt R Zarazúa (Mex) 6-1 7-6 (7-4); **D Yastremska** (Ukr) bt A Sánchez (Mex) 7-6 (7-1) 6-4; **A Kalinina** (Ukr) bt G Min (US) 6-2 6-0; **M Frech** (Pol) bt C Osorio (Col) 6-1 6-2; **S Hunter** (Aus) bt I Shymanovich (Blr) 6-3 6-4; **V Azarenka** (Blr) bt R Montgomery (US) 6-1 6-1; **C Giorgi** (It) bt M Sherif (Egy) 7-5 6-3 **C Dolehide** (US) bt P Stearns (US) 6-7 7-6 7-6; **M Kostyuk** (Ukr) bt S Fung (Can) 6-3 2-6 6-0; **E Navarro** (US) bt M Mateas (US) 6-0 6-4

Second round: Trevisan (It) bt Paolini (It) 7-5 6-1; **H Baptiste** (US) bt Ka Pliskova (Cz) 7-6 (5) 5-7 7-6 (4)

WTA GUANGZHOU OPEN (China)
First round: R Masarova (Sp) bt K Baindl (Ukr) 7-5 6-2; **D Shnaider** (Rus) bt C Liu (US) 6-1 6-3; **C Tauson** (Den) bt L Fruhvirtova (Cz) 6-2 7-6 (8-6); **G Minnen** (Bel) bt D Parry (Fr) 6-2 6-2; **H Dart** (GB) bt J Niemeier (Ger) 6-3 6-2; **M Linette** (Pol) bt J Burrage (GB) 6-7 6-0 6-2.

Fixtures

Football (7.45pm unless stated)
Uefa Champions League
Group stage: Barcelona v Antwerp (8pm); Feyenoord v Celtic (8pm); Lazio v Atlético Madrid (8pm); Manchester City v Red Star Belgrade (8pm); Milan v Newcastle (5.45pm); PSG v Borussia Dortmund (8pm); Shakhtar Donetsk v Porto (8pm); Young Boys v RB Leipzig (5.45pm).
Sky Bet Championship
Bristol City v Plymouth; Cardiff v Coventry; Preston v Birmingham; QPR v Swansea; Sheffield Wed v Middlesbrough (8pm); Southampton v Ipswich.
Sky Bet League One
Barnsley v Portsmouth; Peterborough v Cheltenham; Port Vale v Burton.
Vanarama National League
Altrincham v Hartlepool; Barnet v Aldershot; Boreham Wood v Rochdale; Chesterfield v Halifax; Dag & Red v Bromley; Dorking v Wealdstone; Eastleigh v Oxford City; Gateshead v Kidderminster; Oldham v York; Solihull Moors v Fylde; Southend v Maidenhead; Woking v Ebbsfleet.
EFL Trophy
Bristol Rovers v West Ham U21; Colchester v Tottenham U21 (7.30pm); Derby v Lincoln (7pm); Doncaster v Everton U21 (7pm); Exeter v Reading (7pm); Leyton Orient v Fulham U21 (7pm); Morecambe v Liverpool U21 (7pm); Oxford Utd v MK Dons (7pm); Shrewsbury v Brighton U21 (7pm); Sutton Utd v Aston Villa U21; Wigan v Leicester U21 (7pm); Wycombe v Crystal Palace U21 (7pm).

Cricket (10.30am unless stated)
LV= Insurance County Championship (first day of four)
Division One Essex v Hampshire, Chelmsford; Lancashire v Nottinghamshire, Emirates Old Trafford; Middlesex v Warwickshire, Lord's; Somerset v Kent, Taunton; Surrey v Northamptonshire, the Oval.
Division Two Derbyshire v Sussex, Derby; Leicestershire v Yorkshire, Grace Road; Worcestershire v Durham, New Road.

Greg Wood's racing tips

Redcar **1.50** Tacitus **2.25** Cuban Storm **3.00** Elzaal **3.35** Ron O **4.10** Jojo Rabbit **4.45** Plink **5.20** Assembled
Uttoxeter **2.00** Dakota Beat **2.35** Olivers Travels **3.10** Justshortofabubble **3.45** Do No Wrong **4.20** Isabella Bee **4.55** Democritus
Yarmouth **2.15** Rosenzoo **2.50** Witness Stand **3.25** Manhattan Mirage **4.00** Prometeo **4.35** Musical Tribute (nb) **5.10** Tarbaan **5.45** Stone Circle (nap) **6.15** Darlo Pride
Newcastle **4.50** Toscan Genius **5.25** The Hun **6.00** Balqaa **6.30** Arizona Desert **7.00** Dianara **7.30** Sun Power **8.00** Patontheback **8.30** Explorers Way

Roy weighs up England future after axe from World Cup squad

Simon Burnton

Jason Roy is considering his international future after being dumped from a World Cup squad at the 11th hour for the second time in a year.

Roy could still appear in the World Cup should one of England's opening batters sustain an injury – as he himself did during the T20 World Cup in 2021 – and he is the first-choice reserve for those positions, but first he must decide how much he still wants to play for an international side that have twice discarded him.

Luke Wright, the England men's national selector, said Roy was "absolutely gutted" when informed by Jos Buttler that he had lost his place in the 15 that will travel to India this month, but that the door for a return was ajar.

"We've made it clear to Jason that we still see him as that batting reserve at the top of the order," Wright said. "For Jason now, I'm sure he's got some thinking to do over the initial disappointment. It's not an easy pill to swallow. The [initial] response was he's still available for England. Unless that's changed that's how we see it."



▲ *Jason Roy has been discarded by England for the second time in a year*

Roy has been invited to join the squad preparing to play Ireland in three one-day internationals, starting at Headingley tomorrow, but is yet to give a response – and he is still dealing with the back injury that ruled him out of the series against New Zealand.

"We've given Jason the option of being involved," Wright said. "To get the news that he was missing out came as a bit of a hammer blow, so we've left that with Jason. We've made it apparent to Jason that we won't judge him differently for that position as the spare batter at the top of the order whether he plays against Ireland or not."

Wright explained that the decision to replace Roy with Harry Brook was a consequence of his injury, Dawid Malan's good performances against the Black Caps, and the decision to take only one spare batter.

"In the early squad we had [Roy] down for opening the batting with Jonny [Bairstow] and Malan giving us cover from No 1 to No 4, [but] we realised things had slightly changed and Dawid would be the one opening the batting with Jonny in the World Cup," Wright said. "Then it was a case of the spare batter and what did that look like?

"From Jason's point of view, he probably only covers us for an opener. Harry gives us cover from No 1 to No 6. It's hard to leave out someone with Roy's pedigree, but also it was so hard to leave out someone with Harry Brook's talent. Harry's got the nod."

Unlike the previous two T20 World Cups England do not plan to name any travelling reserves, having concluded, in Wright's words, that "it's a tough trip when you are not involved in the squad". Instead they plan to ask a number of players to "keep ticking over" in case they need to be summoned at short notice. But Jofra Archer will join the group to continue his rehabilitation from a stress fracture to his right elbow with England's team of coaches and physios.

Joe Root has asked to play in the first game against Ireland, after four disappointing performances against New Zealand. "He just wanted a bit more time," Wright said. "It shows what makes him such a world-class player, that when he doesn't feel quite right he still wants to tinker and do more."

Sussex lose 12 points

Sussex's hopes of promotion in the County Championship have been dealt a significant blow after the club were docked 12 points for reaching a threshold of four fixed penalties in a single season. The captain, Cheteshwar Pujara, has received a one-match suspension and will miss the game at Derbyshire that starts today. The final two infractions occurred last week in the 15-run win against Leicestershire. PA Media

Tennis

Davis Cup heroics prove there is life after Murray

Reliant on their one elite player for so long, a riveting victory in Manchester shows Britain have real depth at last

Tumaini Carayol

As Andy Murray completed his comeback against Switzerland's Leandro Riedi on Friday during an unforgettable Davis Cup week in Manchester, his victory maintained the standards of one of the all-time great careers in the competition: across his 18 years, Murray holds a 33-3 record in singles.

It is a reflection of his greatness but also of the state of British tennis during much of his premiership. In order for Britain to achieve anything at all as a national team, such excellence was required of him every time he stepped on to the court. When he lost, Britain failed.

How things have changed. One of the clear themes of the past week in Manchester was the excellent strength in depth that the British team have acquired over the past few years, with the numerous elite singles and doubles players thriving by sharing the load.

Every member of the team has played a role in their success this year. During a tough February qualifying tie on clay and at high altitude in Colombia, Cameron Norrie led the British team through with two singles wins. In Manchester, though, the British No 1 was the only member of the team not to win a rubber.

No matter, every other player stepped up. Andy Murray and Jack Draper chipped in with hard-fought singles wins from behind. Neal Skupski performed skilfully in two decisive doubles rubbers, including during the pandemonium on Sunday night as he and Dan Evans saved four match points before clinching the tie against France.

No player contributed more than Evans, though, whose incredible leading performance further underlines his late-career flourish. Evans has always been clear and effusive about his passion for the Davis Cup and he has been a constant presence on the team for 14 years. But he wasn't always capable of winning.

The 33-year-old spent half of his career outside of the top 100, undisciplined and significantly underachieving. His transformation from a nonentity into an excellent perennial top-30 player capable of battling with anyone in both singles and doubles is impressive and admirable.

Evans's success also shows the importance of the Davis Cup and its ability, both in the UK and around the world, to reach areas not served by the grand slam tournaments. Evans's dreams of becoming a professional tennis player were consolidated by the various Davis Cup ties held around Birmingham during his youth, not Wimbledon.

"Davis Cup is why I played tennis at the start," Evans said on Sunday. "I remember watching America, Portugal, Thailand … all of those ties were in Birmingham and that was one of my first introductions to tennis. Obviously, Wimbledon, but that was nowhere near where I live. That was my first introduction. For me, that was the be-all and end-all, to play Davis Cup for your country, and it still is."



▲ *Dan Evans is elated after Britain's nail-biting doubles win against France*
NATHAN STIRK/GETTY IMAGES FOR LTA

Over the past decade, Britain has hosted countless Davis Cup ties in Glasgow. While the LTA was correct to target Scotland after the era-defining success of Andy and Jamie Murray, it is shocking that no tie had been held in Manchester for 29 years.

Finally given the opportunity to host, Manchester stepped up. The sold-out 13,000 AO Arena audience on Sunday was Great Britain's biggest Davis Cup crowd in its 123-year history in the event. Somewhere in the stands of the Manchester venue, a young player was inspired by the sight of the British team teetering on the verge of defeat before recovering to secure their victory.

The Davis Cup quarter-final draw will be made this afternoon and Great Britain face a tough quarter-final match in Málaga regardless. They will face either Novak Djokovic's Serbia or Italy, who could boast Jannik Sinner and Matteo Berrettini.

For the British players, the Davis Cup has imbued added motivation into the autumn swing. The final months of a long season can be difficult, with players struggling for motivation and running on fumes. But now they are playing for so much more.

The quality of the top four singles players means there is everything to play for and nothing is set. They will each navigate the final months knowing their form and performances will likely play a large part in deciding whether they spend their time in Málaga on the court or cheering from the bench.



◀ Owen Farrell will finally get his chance for England after his four-match ban

Farrell's return gives Borthwick a conundrum

England fly-half's availability after suspension will not be a simple positional selection, given Ford's form in France

Gerard Meagher
Nice

It is not Steve Borthwick's style, but it would be quite the two-fingered salute to England's critics for the returning Owen Farrell, George Ford and Marcus Smith to all be unleashed against Chile on Saturday from the start. It would be a radical selection - and there is not much radical about this England management - but "not unthinkable", according to the attack coach Richard Wigglesworth before a selection meeting yesterday afternoon.

Either way, we can safely say there will be changes with England putting one foot and a few toes into the quarter-finals with their uninspiring victory against Japan, but more than that Farrell is available again after a four-match ban.

It might not have been the plan for Farrell to play against Chile a while back - you would have thought Borthwick had earmarked this game as an opportunity to vary his lineup - but just as was the case with Johnny Sexton in Ireland's opener against Romania, the England captain needs a hit-out.

Farrell, you imagine, has been like a coiled spring these past couple of weeks. Suspended players are not allowed in the vicinity of the playing field so he has not even been able to take part in the warm-ups. He has been limited to leading the opposition in England's training sessions and just a few minutes after full time against Japan thoughts turned to his return.

"We're delighted that his ban is over and I've just been joking with him there because he's not been allowed on the field but after that game he's officially allowed back on," Ford said. "We're delighted, you can imagine what he's been like in training, the influence he's having and the influence he has had on the team in the past. Me, Owen and Marcus are doing our utmost to drive this team forward. Steve will make his selections to win the games and we'll buy into that."

The question is where Farrell plays, because Ford has been man of the match in England's two matches and, as much as a significant number of supporters do not like it, he has shown himself to be the fly-half most adept at carrying out Borthwick's gameplan. Pairing them together, then, may be a shrewder move.

Under Borthwick, Ford and Farrell have managed only five minutes in the 10-12 partnership that became a staple of Eddie Jones's side but has not been seen from the start for England since March 2021. He has wanted to reprise it since taking over from the Australian but Ford was not deemed fit enough to play during the Six Nations and, though Manu Tuilagi and Joe Marchant have done little wrong at the World Cup, it would be no surprise to see Farrell slot in at inside-centre against Chile and share the burden of igniting England's attack with Ford. "It definitely can work because it's worked before for England," Wigglesworth said.

If Borthwick ultimately decides to give Ford a rest, however, it could either mean he rekindles the Smith-Farrell axis at 10-12 or puts Farrell at fly-half and gives Smith a first start at 15 after another eye-catching cameo against Japan.

"I think [Marcus has] been really smart with how he has done it," Wigglesworth said. "One, he wants the ball. He is desperate to get his hands on the ball first and foremost. But he's been really smart with where he positions himself, how he gets it, and hasn't tried to play like a 10 out wide. He's gone: 'Get me the ball, and then I'll play on.' Then he'll use the capability he's got with his feet and his acceleration. It's really testament to him about how smart he is."

What is clear is that Borthwick has a variety of options at his disposal to add more playmakers to his side should he wish to divert from his current gameplan. "If you've got a genuine playmaker at 12, you've obviously got another set of eyes close to the ball," Wigglesworth said. "But if you look at what a lot of the shapes run from the teams who have that playmaker at 12, they'd be using their 12 flat to line with options around him to keep the defence tight and then play out the back to then try and get their guys a bit more space out wide.

"Whereas, a dual playmaker at 15 - I played with one in Alex Goode - and obviously Marcus has come on and done a great job for us and it's best there where they can get the ball in slightly wider and slightly earlier and then do the damage out there."

Analysis
Robert Kitson



◀ Portugal's Nicolas Martins took inspiration from Uruguay's display
PETER CZIBORRA/REUTERS

Portugal prove defeat with imagination can trump robotic victory

What, ultimately, is the *raison d'être* of sport? The result, or how a game or moment makes you feel? Different people tend to have different answers. World Cups, in particular, are about scoring more points than the other lot. The touchy-feely stuff can then be ladled on top, dependent on personal taste.

The complication arrives on weekends such as the one just gone in France. On Saturday night a few of us spoke to the Portugal flanker Nicolas Martins after his side's gallant defeat by Wales in Nice. Portugal had just been beaten 28-8 but gained tens of thousands of admirers in the process with their brand of fast-paced rugby.

Martins scored their only try and had a strong all-round game. Aged 24, he plays his club rugby for Soyaux-Angoulême in France's Pro D2 but his captain, Tomás Appleton, is a dentist and only one squad member plays in the Top 14, French rugby's premier league. What *Os Lobos* did have, though, was spirit, purpose and skill and Martins's eyes were still gleaming. "It was an incredible feeling to be part of the small group of people to score in Rugby World Cups," he said. "After the game, when I looked at my phone, all my friends and family were saying: 'Congratulations, I am very happy for you.' I think what we showed during this game will make a good future for us."

He added that Portugal had been inspired by Uruguay's performance against France last week. Again Uruguay lost but they delighted neutrals worldwide with their proactive style and refusal to bow to the supposed script. "Of course they inspired us. They competed against France, who maybe thought they were stronger than them. Now I think all the big countries are going to be a bit scared [of teams like us]. I think it's going to be good for the future of the competition."

The same felt gloriously true of Fiji's statement win against Australia, the first time since 1954 the Wallabies had been beaten by their Pacific island opponents. It was less the result itself that resonated than the intoxicating new sense of possibility; of so-called "tier one" walls starting to crumble and being replaced by something more egalitarian.

The celebratory hymn singing, the post-match emotion in the stands and back at home … the infectious joy reflected everything good about rugby. Multimillion-dollar investment by World Rugby has played a part, as has Fijian Drua's elevation to Super Rugby, previously the sole preserve of the bigger southern hemisphere nations. Above all has been the drive to change the narrative and level out a playing field that has tilted the other way for too long. The minnows are minnows no longer.

Which brings us to the tournament's pantomime villains. The reason why even some of England's most loyal fans have been growing exasperated has,



▲ Waisea Nayacalevu revels in Fiji's statement victory over Australia

ultimately, only so much to do with results or even the monotony of their kick-obsessed gameplan. Everyone appreciates winning is the goal at World Cups and Steve Borthwick is perfectly entitled to set up his team in whatever manner he wants.

The problem, for many, is that England are self-evidently not maximising the talents at their disposal. When Alex Mitchell, a bright scrum-half who specialises in quick-witted counterattacking, kicks away prime turnover ball on the Japanese 22, it is a monumental waste on every level. When the gifted Elliot Daly, even with potential space in front of him, puts left foot to ball almost every time he receives it, it suggests data-driven orders have suffocated personal expression.

Playing poorly and winning is not a crime; but in this instance the straitjacket nature of England's game is serving "anti-rugby". The boos that rang around the Stade de Nice during the Japan game were not aimed at the number of kicks per se but the one-dimensional approach which better teams will surely exploit.

England supporters paying €300 per ticket to watch the national team at a World Cup are not naive. They have long since learned to accept the good, the bad and the ugly. But what they do want to see is sport played by human beings, not seemingly pre-programmed robots. They want people to be open and honest when, for example, their team has obviously not played well, regardless of outcome. They want players to whom they can relate and a team capable of making their hearts sing.

Which brings us back to Fiji, Portugal, Uruguay and rugby's other have-nots. In their differing ways they have reminded their supposed betters that sport is as much about the journey as the destination. And that rugby is poorer without desire and ambition. "If we want to compete against higher-level teams and big countries, of course we need more Tests against them," Martins said, conscious Portugal still have much ground to make up. "In the Rugby Europe championship we play against Poland or Belgium. It's not good to say this but they are weaker than us."

Even in defeat, though, Portugal were heroic and inspiring. Which underlines the fact that World Cups are not just outcome driven. They are also about daring to dream and providing supporters, as much as the players, with lifelong memories. Strike a healthy balance between pragmatism, pride and passion and everybody wins.



Williamson to address UN on refugees: 'It breaks my heart'

Arsenal defender, who visited a Syrian refugee camp in Jordan last month, will speak at a New York summit today

Suzanne Wrack

When the Arsenal and England centre-back Leah Williamson steps up to speak at the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals summit today she will feel a very different level of scrutiny to the pressure she feels when she steps out on to the pitch. "Head up, face forward, don't drop your Ts," she says with a grin beforehand.

Williamson is the first England women's national team player to take the stage at the UN, and it's an opportunity that may not have come around had the anterior cruciate ligament injury which ruled her out of the World Cup not afforded her the time to visit the Za'atari refugee camp in Jordan, the largest Syrian refugee camp in the world.

That is where Williamson travelled to in August, visiting the joint initiative of Save the Children and the Arsenal Foundation that gives girls in the camp the chance to engage with a variety of programmes through football.

"I've been speaking about going to Jordan for a while," Williamson says from her New York hotel room. "They've been on the radar. I've worked with the foundation, and obviously been involved in the Coaching for Life programme they run for a while now.

"So, as soon as I got injured, the way I sat down to deal with it – because it's ultimately just a slog and you enter into it to come out the other side – was I planned out everything. We looked at when I needed to take rests, then we planned these trips around that. So it's been great to be able to tick boxes that I wanted to do, but also give back in a way like that as well."

When Williamson finally gets back on the pitch, the desire is to keep a balance that allows the 26-year-old to do more of the community and foundation work. "When you're injured you demonstrate to yourself that there is a balance to be found," the England captain says. "But it's all about performance, it's about being ready every day. You can do it [find that balance], but with the scheduling of games it makes it so much harder. So, not that I would ever be happy to be injured, but this time and these experiences and giving back is important."



Williamson ruptured an anterior cruciate ligament in April

Hearing about the lives of the girls they work with can be tough. "I find it really hard," Williamson says. "Because naturally, in the world, when somebody tells you a problem you want to try and help fix it – and it's obviously not as simple as that. The hardest moments were talking with parents in some of the sessions aimed at helping them understand why their daughters should be allowed to participate in sport.

"It started off as a really great conversation, just listening to their views on how it's changed for them, and how much they love their daughters being involved. Then, one of the fathers basically said because they have this confidence now and they're making their way in the world, then maybe he has to leave to seek an opportunity for them. We all know what leaving a refugee camp means, the risk to life, the travelling, potentially across the sea.

"It hit me, because they have these dreams but ultimately circumstance and the lottery of birthplaces has set them back compared to us. It breaks my heart every time because none of us know what comes next for them."

Williamson is used to telling girls to follow their dreams and to find their passion, but she can't say these things in the Za'atari camp. "You can't say to a kid: 'Just dream as big as you want to.' I can't provide that reassurance for them, which is hard."

Football camps there cannot provide a certain future, but it can provide a sense of escape. "That is universal," Williamson says. "When I step on a pitch, no matter what I think about beforehand, as soon as I step on that pitch it all goes away. It's not a conscious effort, it just takes all your worries away



Leah Williamson used her injury layoff to visit the Za'atari camp
CHARLIE FORGHAM-BAILEY/SAVE THE CHILDREN



and all your thoughts. And I think, for them, that is obviously just a massive, massive thing, especially combined with the resilience sessions that they do."

Williamson is used to speaking out – she was part of the England team that won the Euros last year and then demanded equal access to sport for boys and girls in schools. While she embraces being outspoken and an activist, she gets frustrated with the conversations around it. "People will say: 'Bore off with your activism,' or: 'Just play the game.' I'm like: 'This is life. It's life and it's the conversations of life and real circumstances. There's no story, there's no drama, it is black and white: this is the way we're treated, and this is the way that we should be treated, and the majority of the population agree with us.'

'We still have a situations, like we do in Za'atari, with a refugee camp filled with people fleeing war. So when people talk to me about it I just think: 'Why does everybody not want to live in a better world? Why would you not contribute to it if you could?' That's why I'm uncomfortable with the way the word activism is used, because I think it's just how normal people should behave."

Seeing the struggles of the girls in the Za'atari camp puts challenges back home in perspective too. "When people say 'no' to me here, now I think: 'No? Really?' Because if we can do it there, we can do it here," Williamson says. "There is no reason to stop us here, it's just an opinion or somebody that doesn't agree, instead of actual barriers, like not having a home. I try not to compare it because that would drive me insane, or I'd feel even more useless.

"But in terms of trying to change for the better, I'm like: 'You're going to need to give me a better reason than "no" because when I asked for something I think is worthy, it's achievable. I know it is.'"

WSL can meet billion-pound revenue target, says chair

Suzanne Wrack

Those in charge of the Women's Super League plan on making it the first billion-pound women's football league in the world, according to its chair, Dawn Airey.

Speaking in the buildup to the new WSL season kicking off on 1 October, Airey said the intention is to hit that revenue target within a decade. "The whole of women's sport globally [generates] a billion dollars in revenues, from sponsorship and gates, a billion dollars in revenue globally. Men's sport gets half a trillion. That's an enormous difference and it shows the enormous potential for women's sport, and women's football in particular," said Airey, who is also chair of the Women's Championship.

The running of the WSL and Championship will be shifted from the Football Association to the clubs as part of the next stage in the development of the domestic women's game, with a new company – NewCo – being set up to run the two leagues independently of the governing body. The ambition is to hand over the top two divisions to NewCo by the end of the year, giving the new body time to settle in before the 2024-25 season. They have been working on the structure of the leagues and NewCo for "a few years", said Airey.

"Have we got the right financing? Can we establish this independent body to run and manage the leagues that's properly financed? We're working on the finances, we're working on governance. How are decisions made? That's complicated," Airey said. "Then there's the issues of what are the protections that the FA rightly wants to put in place before these leagues are handed over … We are making good progress."

The FA director of women's football, Sue Campbell, has been keen to stress the WSL and Championship are not being separated. "One of the big discussions we're having is what percentage of income is guaranteed to the Championship so that it thrives and grows. We want to sort that now. Below that, we've a massive job to do with the National League and below."

In light of the continuing battle between the Spain women's team and their federation over creating a safe working environment, Campbell said there will be "new welfare guidelines coming in" as part of the WSL's and Championship's licensing.



▲ *Dawn Airey is looking to harness the 'enormous potential' of the WSL*

Howe plots to pile more pain on hurting Milan

Newcastle's manager sought permission to train at home after fearing spies from a side reeling from a 5-1 derby defeat

Louise Taylor
Milan

Newcastle fans arriving in northern Italy yesterday were greeted by the chaotic combination of a public transport strike and the start of Milan fashion week. Yet as Geordies dressed in black and white replica shirts joined international fashionistas in queueing for increasingly elusive and expensive taxis, Eddie Howe and his players remained immune from the frustration surrounding the preamble to the team's long-awaited Champions League return.

Football managers are prone to control-freak tendencies and Howe's determination to keep the merest hint of chance, let alone chaos, at bay is such that he routinely clocks in at St James' Park at 9.30am on Saturdays for 3pm Premier League fixtures. Given that even the meticulously prepared Rafael Benítez used to turn up around midday for such games, Howe's obsession with his job - and getting it right - is evident.

This mindset dictates that Newcastle's first Champions League match for two decades was always going to be a very big deal for Howe. It explains why he asked Uefa for special permission to train on Tyneside yesterday afternoon, ignoring the convention that away teams limber up at their opponents' stadium the night before showpiece European games.

Newcastle's manager feared Milan might spy on his dress rehearsal, gaining an advantage before tonight's opening group game. Having received Uefa's blessing, the team did not land in Italy until early yesterday evening, remaining immune to the increasingly febrile mood in a city where Newcastle fans' can be heard sporadically chanting: "Have you ever seen a Mackem in Milan?"

Heightened Italian emotions stem from the *Rossoneri's* 5-1 thrashing at the hands of Internazionale last weekend. After refusing to apologise, Stefano Pioli, Milan's manager, found himself at the eye of a storm, with La Gazzetta dello Sport declaring: "It was five slaps, one after another." Undeterred, Pioli retorted: "You should only apologise when you do something wrong on purpose."

The Italian media enjoy greater access to players and managers than their English counterparts so Pioli had no option but to grit his teeth as Milan stuck to their pre-European assignment routine and threw their doors open to stage a training session alongside another journalistic inquisition yesterday.

It will not be lost on Howe that Milan, who are third in Serie A, had won their previous three games. Or that they possess an outstanding left winger in Portugal's Rafael Leão. His duel with Kieran Trippier promises to be a key subplot of a match expected to feature a quartet of former Chelsea players in Fikayo Tomori, Ruben Loftus-Cheek, Christian Pulisic and Olivier Giroud.


Olivier Giroud cuts a dejected figure in Milan's 5-1 derby defeat by Inter on Saturday

The biggest reunion involves Sandro Tonali. The Italy midfielder, who helped Milan secure their first Scudetto for 11 years in 2022, departed for Newcastle for £55m this summer and should start after recovering from a thigh strain. Much tonight, and indeed for the remainder of Newcastle's season, may hinge on the evolution of Tonali's currently strained central-midfield partnership with Bruno Guimarães.

Howe's players will kick off at San Siro buoyed by the 1-0 victory against Brentford on Saturday, that slightly unconvincing win having ended a run of three Premier League defeats in succession.

"I think we'll enjoy Milan a little bit more now," said a manager whose side must also face Paris Saint-German and Borussia Dortmund in the group stage. "I haven't been calm for the last three or four weeks because this job is my life. This is everything, so I'm giving everything to try to be successful and when things aren't going quite to plan I'm very emotional. But hopefully now we've won again we can enjoy Italy. We're intending to show the best version of ourselves."

Newcastle's manager normally sticks to the stock managerial "one game at a time" mantra but admits he has been burning the midnight oil ever since the draw for the Champions League group stages were made at the end of last month. "You can't suddenly switch on to Milan with two days' notice," Howe said. "We worked on different things and increased our workload in preparation during the international break."

As the final whistle blows at San Siro, Howe will hope to have presided over a performance Sir Bobby Robson would have treasured. "I'll be immensely proud to be the first manager to lead the team out in the Champions League since Sir Bobby in 2003," Newcastle's latest manager said. "I'm excited for the players, I'm excited for the supporters. It's going to be a great moment for us all."

TNT Sports 1 *5.45pm*

▼ *Sandro Tonali returns to face the club he helped to win the Serie A title in 2022*


SERENA TAYLOR/NEWCASTLE UNITED VIA GETTY IMAGES

Guardiola urges City to be European kings again

Jamie Jackson

Pep Guardiola is proud of Manchester City's Champions League triumph last season but stated it is "nothing special" compared with winning the trophy on multiple occasions, and so he has urged his team to win back-to-back titles.

City secured European football's biggest prize for the first time with victory against Internazionale in Istanbul in May. They begin their defence with the visit of Red Star Belgrade tonight and Guardiola wants his players to focus on emulating Real Madrid, who in 2017 and 2018 became the only team to retain the European Cup since Arrigo Sacchi's Milan in 1990, in the pre-Champions League era.

Ferran Soriano, City's chief executive, said last week that "people are relaxed" at the club in regards to this aim. When that comment was put to Guardiola, he offered a rather different response. "He feels [this]? Important is that the players don't feel relaxed. The board and chairman [Khaldoon al-Mubarak] and CEO are relaxed - that's good. They don't play.


Erling Haaland celebrates after Manchester City won the Champions League in June

"I'd like to say that for our club to win the Champions League is incredible. But in terms of the Champions League: how many teams have won it once? A lot have won two, three, four, five. In perspective, we did nothing special. Just one. [But] we didn't have it and we're proud."

Despite the rarity of the feat, Guardiola believes retaining the trophy should not be so hard. "It's easier. It's most difficult to win the first one. It's something incredible for us, the first time in history, but it's just once. Let's go. Let's try to win tomorrow against a team so aggressive, so fast up front."

City won the treble last season before securing the Super Cup in August with victory against Sevilla. They have also begun the Premier League season in imperious fashion, winning all five of their opening fixtures. "They [the fans] are happy, we're happy," Guardiola said. "Yesterday we took a picture of the team with the four trophies, but it's over now.

"If I wanted to live for the memories I wouldn't be here. I'd be at home or on a beach. We played the Super Cup against Sevilla, three days later against Newcastle. Not an ideal situation. This is a challenge, it is what it is. Go for it.

"The competition gives us a new challenge so at least try. Just as Madrid or the Sacchi period with Milan, they did it again in a row. I was incredibly proud at Barcelona to win

In News Barry Bennell
Serial paedophile who abused boys as a football coach dies in prison *Page 18* →



'I've been busy'
Howe prepares for baptism among the elite

Louise Taylor
Milan

Eddie Howe has admitted he will watch a Champions League game live in person for the first time tonight, when Newcastle play Milan at San Siro. "I've never attended one, I've been too busy working," the manager said after his team's heavily delayed flight from Tyneside meant his pre-match press conference was put back two hours until 9pm local time. "Tomorrow will be a proud moment."

The good news for Howe is that the severe thunderstorms that brought torrential rain to Milan and left Newcastle's charter flight stuck on the runway are expected to give way to clear skies. "The weather problems were no big issue," Howe said. "It's a slightly later arrival than we would have liked but we're used to these sort of things." Howe did miss Uefa's deadline for the press conference, for which there may be repercussions.

Milan's convalescence from their 5-1 thrashing by Internazionale last weekend was bolstered by a training-ground pep talk from their visiting former Sweden striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic yesterday morning.

"It's a different competition, a different day," Howe said, emphasising he saw no grounds for false optimism as he prepares to become the first Newcastle manager since Sir Bobby Robson to lead the team into Champions League combat. "The start will be key. We have to be at our best."

Stefano Pioli has warned his Milan backline to be wary of Newcastle's key strikers, Alexander Isak and Callum Wilson. "Newcastle seem like a classic English team to me, with physicality and intensity," Milan's manager said. "Without neglecting their quality, they are very tall and dangerous on the dead balls."

Pioli suggested that Sandro Tonali, Newcastle's £55m summer arrival from Milan, will receive a warm reception. "Sandro was important to us when we won the title last year so we will receive him with affection."

▼ *Callum Hudson-Odoi equalises with his stunning second-half strike*
MARC ATKINS/GETTY IMAGES



Premier League

Double VAR trouble for Foster helps Forest draw

Nottingham Forest	**1**
Hudson-Odoi 61	
Burnley	**1**
Amdouni 41	

Ben Fisher
City Ground

Burnley may have registered their first point of the season with this draw at Nottingham Forest to avoid the ignominy of a fourth straight league defeat but they will feel aggrieved at not claiming victory after Lyle Foster's second-half goal was controversially ruled out after a VAR review. To compound things Foster was sent off via the video screen in stoppage time for elbowing Ryan Yates.

The Burnley substitute Sander Berge was deemed to have used his forearm to control the ball before Foster converted his cutback from the edge of the six-yard box. The ball bounced off the top of Berge's left arm as he kept Scott McKenna at bay but the Forest defender made no complaint to the referee, Robert Jones, as Foster wheeled away in celebration.

McKenna had made a hash of a pass over the top of the defence, ending up on all fours after slipping and presenting Berge with the chance to pile into the box and pass to Foster, who swept the ball in from close range. But as soon as the referee headed for the VAR monitor there was a groundswell of cheers from the home support.

The Forest fans knew what was coming but those of a Burnley persuasion were not quite so enamoured with the call. At least from the officials' perspective, the chances of them getting an ear-bashing from Vincent Kompany anytime soon seems unlikely. "I have a decent business brain and a decent coaching brain but when it comes to the laws and the legalities, I switch off," he said. "I've made a decision to just trust that they know what they're doing and they have the right intentions. It is not something I want to discuss because I cannot change it."

These teams duelled at this stadium in the Carabao Cup 19 days before this game but only six players from the starting lineups then began this fixture: three Forest and Burnley players apiece. Were it not for the late drama, the discourse would have been dominated by Callum Hudson-Odoi's magnificent debut strike, a divine, curling effort. It ultimately earned Forest a point after Zeki Amdouni had struck with a wonderful effort of his own, smacking a first-time shot into the bottom corner.



▲ *Stuart Broad and Jimmy Anderson enjoy the action*

Hudson-Odoi's only other appearance in a Forest shirt came a fortnight ago for the under-21s in contrasting surrounds: an hour in a Papa John's Trophy defeat at Harrogate Town. If Amdouni's strike was clean, then Hudson-Odoi's was a pure thing of beauty. Taiwo Awoniyi did superbly to get a floated cross under his spell under pressure from Johann Gudmundsson – the video assistant referee, Darren England, cleared the Forest striker's close control for handball – and located Hudson-Odoi on the edge of the box. He shifted the ball on to his right foot and promptly bent a sumptuous effort towards goal, an unerring finish that kissed the far post on its final descent into the Burnley net.

Hudson-Odoi reunited with Steve Cooper, his manager when England won the Under-17 World Cup six years ago, after a deadline-day move from Chelsea for an initial £3m, which seemed a snip long before his fine leveller here. "It was a beautiful strike, beautiful technique," the Forest head coach said. "I know he has quality, I know he can have moments of brilliance and you need that at times."

Kompany's diplomacy was admirable but perhaps it was easier to cut a relaxed figure because of how his team, pointless at the outset, had performed. Kompany picked out Charlie Taylor, who until this trip had not made a match-day squad in the league this season. Amdouni was relentless and Luca Koleosho proved so problematic for the World Cup winner Gonzalo Montiel that Cooper introduced Nuno Tavares and moved Ola Aina to right-back in an attempt to tame the 19-year-old Italian winger.

Burnley were on the back foot for the first half an hour, before Amdouni forced Matt Turner into a plunging save, but even after the disappointment of the disallowed goal they finished strongly. "It is fair to say it was a dramatic game," Kompany said. "This journey for us is not easy but we can grow."

Nottingham Forest
4-2-3-1
Turner; Montiel● (Tavares 53), Worrall, McKenna, Aina; Mangala● (Yates 71), Sangaré; Elanga, Hudson-Odoi (Origi 71), Gibbs-White; Awoniyi (Wood 88)
Subs not used Vlachodimos, Kouyaté, Santos, Domínguez, Niakhaté

Burnley
4-4-2
Trafford●; Roberts●, al-Dakhil, Beyer (Delcroix 87), Taylor; Gudmundsson (Zaroury 63), Cullen●, Brownhill, Koleosho (Trésor 76); Amdouni (Berge 64), Foster●
Subs not used Muric, Cork, Rodriguez, Benson, Zaroury, Ramsey

Referee Robert Jones **Attendance** 28,958

two in four years [as coach, in 2009 and 2011] but we didn't win it in a row. Let's try by being ourselves."

Guardiola pointed to half-time of the 3-1 win at West Ham on Saturday, when the champions found themselves 1-0 down, as evidence of his team's desire. "I [came] to the players because they were angry. I said: 'Why are you angry? We're losing but you performed really well. Be more clinical up front and it would've been 3-1.'

"We push them but it comes from them. We have an incredible mentality in the players. I'm a little bit surprised that after all the years [of success], the treble, this shows the team is really good."

TNT Sports 2 *8pm*

Celtic waiting on Phillips

Nat Phillips remains a doubt for Celtic's Champions League opener against Feyenoord despite training yesterday. The on-loan Liverpool defender's debut was cut short on Saturday when he injured an ankle towards the end of the first half against Dundee. He was replaced by Gustaf Lagerbielke at half-time. Brendan Rodgers said at the De Kuip Stadium in Rotterdam last night: "Nat has rolled his ankle so we will just have to see on that. But other than that pretty much the guys are fine, they are working their way up to fitness." PA Media

In brief

Manchester United

Injured Wan-Bissaka out for several weeks

Manchester United have confirmed Aaron Wan-Bissaka is set to be sidelined for several weeks after picking up an injury against Brighton on Saturday. United are preparing for tomorrow's Champions League group game at Bayern Munich on the back of the 3-1 home loss to Roberto De Zerbi's men in which the full-back, who was named on the bench having dealt with illness in the buildup, picked up an injury when brought on as an 85th-minute substitute. A United statement said: "Further assessment will be needed to determine how long Wan-Bissaka will be out for, but initial indications suggest it will be several weeks." **PA Media**

Huddersfield

Warnock to leave Terriers tomorrow

Neil Warnock is to leave Huddersfield after tomorrow's home game against Stoke. The 74-year-old, who signed a one-year contract in the summer having joined the club on a short-term deal in February in order to save them from relegation from the Championship, has agreed he and his assistant, Ronnie Jepson, will step down from their roles at the club to progress plans put in place to "make a longer-term managerial appointment" after an internal overhaul. **PA Media**

England men

National team heading to ITV after Euro 2024

ITV will replace Channel 4 in broadcasting England men's matches from next September, having struck a deal with Uefa that runs up to June 2028. **PA Media**

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Sport

Spoils shared
Hudson-Odoi and VAR deny Burnley a first victory
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Leah Williamson
Lionesses' Euros captain on speaking at UN today
Exclusive *Page 37 →*



Roy mulls future World Cup axe could lead to England retirement
Page 35 →

England's defence

We 'won ugly' in 2003 and can do it again, says Marler

Gerard Meagher
Nice

Joe Marler has pointed to how England won "ugly" at the 2003 World Cup, in defence of the current side's style of play amid fierce criticism despite back-to-back wins in France.

Steve Borthwick's side clinched a bonus-point victory against Japan on Sunday to move to the verge of the quarter-finals but were booed by their own supporters for their route-one gameplan in Nice.

England kicked the ball 42 times in the match for a combined distance of more than a kilometre and though it proved an effective tactic - Japan struggled to deal with Alex Mitchell's box-kicking and George Ford's up-and-unders - supporters who had shelled out hundreds if not thousands of pounds to watch their side made their frustrations clear.

The former France flanker Olivier Magne was damning in his verdict, writing on social media: "This English team is ugly - no desire, no joy, no consistency. It's a repulsive rugby."

It was telling that the 36,000-seat stadium in Nice was not sold out and, though England sealed the bonus point with late tries from Freddie Steward and Joe Marchant, there was more than a slice of fortune to their two earlier scores, through Lewis Ludlam and Courtney Lawes.

Marler, however, insisted stylistic points count for little at World Cup tournaments. Recalling the 2003 side that clinched the title in Sydney, as well as the South Africa team who beat England in the 2019 final, he issued a staunch defence of the approach at this tournament.

The loosehead prop said: "Why do you have to finesse it? You've just got to win, haven't you? What did England do 20 years ago? Find a way to win in the World Cup. We'll keep trying and taking the lessons from each game. We'll take the lessons and we'll keep trying to finesse. Ultimately it's about the win.

"You talk about style of play, a lot of people do. [The 2003 team] went a couple of phases, Jonny [Wilkinson] slotted some penalties and some drop goals. They won ugly, a lot of that tournament they won ugly but we don't talk about that now do we? We talk about them winning the World Cup. You forget about how [they] did it. You don't talk about South Africa getting pumped in the first game against New Zealand, you talk about them pumping us in the final and then lifting the trophy.

"We will continue to work on our game to improve and make sure we've got a better chance of winning those games."

Ford was similarly defiant over England's approach and pointed to the humid conditions, which made for a slippery ball, as a reason to stick to the route-one gameplan. It should also be said that England opened up in the second half and played with greater ambition, particularly when Marcus Smith was introduced for an eye-catching cameo at full-back.

"We're here to win games, aren't we? That's our job," Ford said. "We want [supporters] to be proud of a winning team. We're going to look back and there are some decisions … should we have kept in hand? Should we have kicked it? Why did we kick it there? We scored four tries in the end, it was a tough game, Japan caused us problems and we're two from two so we want to build momentum."



▲ *Joe Marler is not concerned by England's style of play in France*

Farrell's return What will captain's comeback against Chile mean for Borthwick?
Robert Kitson Fiji, Portugal and Uruguay are lighting up World Cup - unlike England
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SERENA TAYLOR/NEWCASTLE UNITED VIA GETTY IMAGES

Better late than never

Howe ready for Newcastle's big night - despite storm in Milan delaying flight

Champions League
Pages 38-39 →

Chaos after coach calls up boycotting Spain players

Suzanne Wrack

There was confusion in Spain last night as to whether members of the women's national team would turn up after Montse Tomé, the new head coach, named 15 of the World Cup-winning players in her squad for Nations League fixtures this month.

Jenni Hermoso, who was kissed after the final victory against England by the then president of the Spanish football federation (RFEF), leading to the crisis, was not among those picked. But despite 39 players making themselves unavailable for selection in an open letter, which said not enough was being done to make them feel safe and respected, 21 of those have been called up by Tomé.

"I trust that the players are professionals, they come from being world champions, they love the profession, being in the Spanish team is a privilege, and I know that they will be with us tomorrow," the coach said.

The federation had put out a statement, saying: "It's clear that the federation, society and the players are aligned with the same objective: the renovation and the start of a new stage where football will be benefited by this whole process." It added: "We guarantee a safe environment for the players, and we are committed to an environment of mutual trust."

However, any conciliatory tone was undone by the unveiling of Tomé's squad, with players not having been consulted beforehand, according to Spanish media.

Initial reports suggested the players would report for training this morning because of the threat of legal action and having their playing licences suspended. However, a statement in the name of the players was posted on Twitter, now known as X, saying: "The call-up has not been made in a timely manner, in accordance with the regulations … so we understand that the RFEF is not in a position to require us to attend."

Toughest at 45, smartest at 63, happiest at 82 …

Why there's so much to look forward to

The Guardian



G2

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Nasty noughties
Zoe Williams on a terrible tabloid era
page 4



'I almost cringed myself inside out'
Lucy Mangan reviews Sex: A Bonkers History
page 10



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Zoe Williams



Send him victorious, happy and glorious? Do we have to?

At the Scotland versus England friendly last week, God Save the King was booed by half the crowd – the Scottish half. In a way, this is surprising, because it is, of course, the national anthem of the UK, so they were technically booing their own song. Yet it is also entirely unsurprising – so much so, in fact, that commentators dredging up outrage at the boos had to find secondary sources, such as: "Why does the Scottish first minister appear to be smirking during the booing?"

Even before the passing of the Queen, it wasn't unheard of for Scotland supporters to boo the national anthem. It happened right after the independence referendum, the message at that time being: "Like all referendums on constitutional matters, this ballot has opened up cracks in society – irreconcilable differences in its branching futures, if you like – that will not quietly go away." Scottish fans once booed Liechtenstein's national anthem, Oben am Jungen Rhein. Really easy mistake to make, as the tunes are identical – except they must have known they were playing Liechtenstein, right? So perhaps the message was less complicated; not so much: "The yoke of this union is a heavy one to bear and we decline to celebrate it in song," more: "We do not like this tune. It is not even a real tune. How on earth two nations (well, five) chose it is beyond us."

Nevertheless, it was not the norm under Elizabeth II to boo so loudly that it drowned out the anthem. It didn't really matter whether you were a royalist or not: there was something unarguable about the monarch. To complain about her was hackneyed saloon-bar-bore talk, like complaining that supermarkets put their Christmas goods out before it was even Halloween. It's not enough for modern life to be rubbish; it has to be rubbish in some new and previously unobserved way if you want a strong opinion about it. Royalism, this entire century, has been such a default position that to deviate from it even mildly has been considered boring and yet rude at the same time, like nit-picking about the crumb in a Victoria sponge someone made you as a favour.

> "Charles is not a novelty, yet he lacks his mother's inevitability

So King Charles is in this unenviable fix: he is not a novelty. There was nothing unexpected about his accession and nothing about him that we didn't know. But he lacks the Queen's inevitability, that sense that he is there because he always has been, and should he ever almost not be, God can be asked to save him and will consider that request reasonable. He lacks, too, that aura of self-abnegation, of having surrendered himself to duty. I am sceptical about how much gratitude anyone owed the Queen, but there was a general consensus that she had lived a life of sacrifice, whereas looking at Charles, I am not sure anyone's first thought would be: "Thank you." The role is just a little bit more contestable, and once you start asking questions, the whole song falls apart. How noble is he really? I am not even sure what gracious means, applied to a person – is it just a using-the-right-cutlery thing? What do we want him to be victorious over? Not the dominions, any more, surely? The climate crisis? This seems a little wishful.

In some quarters, the practical-minded are suggesting that each nation of the union should get its own official anthem. It's hard to say how this solves the booing problem, unless we simultaneously stop playing one another at sports, and it's harder still to figure out what English quality you would choose to immortalise separately. Once we have given up on uniting in chorus around one figurehead, the most convincing organising principle of national identity is to bicker among our nearest neighbours, which is to say each other.

Like every discussion about the future of the union, the immediate fear it unearths in me is a selfish one. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will either embrace existing songs that have long roused their fans, or come up with excellent new ones, while England will be left with the one no one else wants to sing any more.

Working in an office is less romcom, more prison drama

New York magazine has introduced me to the concept of the office 10: the person who would be middlingly attractive in a normal scenario, but in the workplace is unbelievably beautiful. It's a feature of the "self-contained, temporary social ecosystem" that makes you adjust your settings.

If you factor in the boredom of work and the huge proportion of it that is meaningless, the office 10 becomes its raison d'être, the person who can propel you out of bed on the off-chance that they might go to Pret at the same time as you. Be real: you are probably their office 10 as well. It's a closed ecosystem, remember?

The idea of the office spouse – the colleague with whom you spend so much time, in intellectual concord, that you reach a point of intimacy such that other people have to avert their eyes when you have a meeting – is so well worn as to have been drained of its importance. People genuinely mourn their work husband or wife when they move jobs, but they have to suck it up. The career precinct isn't supposed to be about feelings; it's where you go to be go-getting.

Look, I haven't had an office job since the 20th century, but this isn't my memory of it. It had much more of a prison dynamic. Not in a bad way; rather, a constant pitch of wits between a band of delinquents and the omnipresent authorities who had to be placated and evaded. It wasn't a romcom – more Dirty Rotten Scoundrels. But it had its dramas, its intoxications.

It's funny that in all the post-pandemic work-life battles, between those who would happily never set foot at work again and those who couldn't wait to return, the main upside of the office – its 10 – never really came up.



Pass notes



№ 4,611

Emoji dumping

Age: No older than 15.

Appearance: A picture of a black heart and a picture of a suitcase.

Are you taking me on holiday to India, where we'll dine at the 24-hour Black Heart restaurant in Kookas, Jaipur? No, you idiot. You're dumped.

What? Isn't it obvious? The black heart denotes the death of our love; the suitcase means it's time for me to pack my bags. Perfectly clear. Good thing I'm dumping you so I don't have to put up with your pedestrian intellect any longer.

It wasn't clear at all! Why didn't you just write it in words? Listen, I'm a busy person. I don't have time to move my thumb a fraction of an inch more than twice to make it plain to my romantic partner that I want to uncouple.

This is uniquely cruel of you. Oh, hardly unique. The dating site Finding the One polled 2,000 users and found that a third had been dumped by emojis.

God, is this where we are as a society? What's not to like? It's efficient, concise and fun.

It's not fun! I thought we were in love. Oh, rain cloud, sad face with a single tear, front door.

You're sad because it's raining and you're stuck inside? No, I'm reasserting that you're dumped. I'm sad, but after a stormy relationship I'm showing you the door.

Gosh, this is making me feel incredibly melty face. Excuse me? I don't know what that one means.

Aha, not so much fun when someone does it to you, is it? Fine, the trend is not as simple as it sounds. Emojis are vague and open to interpretation, so the first dumping message usually has to be clarified. One survey respondent said she didn't understand when her boyfriend sent her the suitcase emoji. She had to reply with a picture of a question mark.

And they say conversation is dead. It isn't dead, it has just changed. Possibly for the better. This whole Pass notes could have been me doing a suitcase, you doing a question mark, then me doing three suitcases in a row and unfollowing you. Wouldn't that have been better?

No! At least put some effort into it. Oh, you want a typed emoji? How's this: (-_-)

I don't like emoji dumping at all. Fine, I'll text you in words.

Or you could tell me face to face, like an adult. Red diagonal cross. Sick face. Toilet.

Do say: "Broken heart, two suitcases, crying face."

Don't say: "Warthog, dancing woman, confetti horn."

COVER: MARK LONG/THE GUARDIAN

Reading between the lines

At the turn of the century, the tabloid press was untouchable – and women in the public eye faced ceaseless persecution. As the Russell Brand case shows, we are still grappling with the fallout, writes **Zoe Williams**



Russell Brand has denied accusations of rape

The allegations against Russell Brand that surfaced at the weekend and which he has denied – that he is a rapist, a groomer, possessed of a nihilistic sense of impunity – appear concrete and specific, and could terminate in criminal proceedings. In the end, as fellow hero of the conspiracist manosphere Andrew Tate has discovered, the law doesn't care about your YouTube rebuttals or how many cheerleaders you have on TikTok.

The media context that created and rewarded Brand doesn't alter his accountability, minimise any of the accusations or even carry much weight in the establishment of his culpability, but it does demand examination.

When we talk about "hiding in plain sight", we often understand that to mean a celebrity was protected and enabled by others in the industry, because that is easier to swallow than the material we all watched, all enabled. Brand's 2006 tour Shame, for example, featured a routine about choking someone during oral sex that had no components of humour. It was only "funny" because we were watching: the humour was created by our collusion, in much the same way as his 2007 memoir, My Booky Wook, dressed up audacity – "I just described spitting on a woman and dared you to react" – as inventiveness, and only got away with it because, no, we didn't dare.

The writer James Butler remembers the "ironic, nihilist, hypersadist mass culture of the mid-late 00s", when Brand was doing his first nationwide standup tour, taking part in the Royal Variety Performance and recording a special for Comedy Central. This was a time when tabloids were completely unrestrained in their misogyny, and sexual violence was not just the topic of jokes nor the jumping-off point, but the entire joke. It was considered pearl-clutching, joy-killing, to object to a rape joke, just as it was thought – correctly – to be career-ending to allege sexual assault against someone more powerful, who would be openly joking about it by the next day anyway.

This is frequently traced back to the birth of lad culture in the mid-90s, which itself tends now to be characterised as a reaction against "feminism gone too far". In fact, the atmospherics and the underlying philosophies of the 90s lad were very different from the 00s version; perhaps the conflation of the two has blinded us to how much changed between the 20th and 21st centuries.

A word, first, on how much has remained the same. Laura Bates, the author of Men Who Hate Women and the founder in 2012 of Everyday Sexism, cautions: "Everybody is talking about this culture of the past, how these moments from the 2000s would be outrageous and unacceptable in the media now. It's like those people have forgotten that, in the last two years, we've seen one of our biggest-selling newspapers wonder whether a senior British politician is uncrossing and crossing her legs to distract Boris Johnson, and has just recently printed a column wishing that Meghan could be paraded down the streets and pelted with excrement."

But there are things that newspapers did 15 or 20 years ago that they would no longer do today. In 2002, anonymous people on the internet started a countdown to the 16th birthday of Charlotte Church, which was reported in the Sun and the Mirror, with that cloak of plausible deniability that the online world had so recently gifted the mainstream media: "We didn't make this – we're merely telling you it happened." In 2008, photographers lay on the pavement outside the venue where Emma Watson was celebrating her 18th birthday, to take pictures up her skirt that it would have been illegal to print 24 hours before. It is unlikely that the titles would get away with that now. But, likewise, I find it very hard to imagine newspapers skating that sex-offender tightrope in the 90s, still less the 80s. So what exactly had happened?

The phrase "lad culture" was born in 1993, in an article by Sean O'Hagan, but its ultimate poster boy was James Brown, who launched Loaded and recently wrote Animal House, a memoir of his career that is incredibly evocative of the era.

It was explicitly a reaction, not against feminism, but against the way men were conceived by magazine media prior to that. "One of the most central points to it was humour," Brown tells me. "The perspective of American-led men's magazines before Loaded was everything was incredibly serious and uptight: you had to look impeccably smart, you had to spend a lot of money on design-led clothing. GQ would have Michael Heseltine on the cover, Esquire would have Martin Amis, and these guys didn't mean anything to me. I was discovering Vic Reeves and Bob Mortimer." Loaded created this unifying cultural edifice around "men who were falling apart a little bit," Brown says. "Politically aware men" who were "going out, getting pissed, jumping on top of cars".

Even though it was very accepting of the non-Rolex-wearing male experience, it wasn't intended to be an exclusive male space and it wasn't for misfits. "We weren't those nerdy guys. We would never have run an article saying how to chat up a woman," says Brown.

Michael Hogan was the features editor on Sky magazine, which went from a style title to being considered part of the lad-mag stable. He describes the reader they had in mind in the late 90s: "He was aged 16 to 25, maybe a student or early in his career, hedonistic and humorous. He probably had a group of mixed-gender friends, lads and 'ladettes', hanging out together. That was key at the time. Sky's unique pitch was that it wasn't a flat-out lad mag – it was unisex."

Brown remembers that Loaded would be the first magazine to interview Page 3 models and shoot them with clothes on. I remember from the time precisely why we didn't object to lad mags, from a feminist perspective. It was partly because they were genuinely funny and surreal, with a comic hinterland that was, as Brown describes, "Withnail and I, the

Likely Lads, Naked Gun" – and who didn't find that funny?

It was also down to the fact that there was no sense of combat between men and women. There was a baseline assumption that we were all laughing at the same thing. This was an era in which the highest value was in not taking yourself too seriously. This reflected the economic and geopolitical context: the debt bubble that would bite us in 2007 was making everything, from flights across the world to pints in a newly liberalised licensing culture, much cheaper, and the cold war had ended. Nobody was singing pop songs about nuclear annihilation – they were singing about zig-a-zig-ah. It was a time marked by its hedonism, the casualty of which was earnestness. None of that would have worked if it hadn't been genuinely funny.

Hogan says: "With Loaded and Sky, humour was central. Comedians were the new rock'n'roll. All the stuff we liked was tongue-in-cheek and ironic, aware of itself and its own ridiculousness. We worked really hard on headlines and picture captions being really funny. Articles were gonzo-style, goofy, gleeful, wilfully daft." Brown has few regrets about this cultural era: "Using the word 'bird' too much, and constantly going on about drinking, those are the only things that were significantly different about my outlook back then."

But the conversations we had then were whether or not it was feminist to wear fishnets. There was never any subtext of violence against women. By the late 00s, lad-mag controversies were of a completely different nature. Danny Dyer had an agony uncle column in Zoo that he used to advise a reader to cut his ex's face to stop anyone else wanting her. Other advice was to set fire to a reader's girlfriend's pubic hair that he didn't like. These were ghostwritten and as such can only really speak to the new mood in lad mags, but two things had changed. One was a complete normalisation of violence against women and the other was a void where the humour used to be. The norm had been flipped: the argument in the 90s, that anything was fair game so long as it was funny, had turned into: "Anything is allowable, so long as I say it is funny."

This was an era in which the tabloids were more or less untouchable; the hacking scandal didn't break until 2011 and, in the meantime, it was much easier to get a ringside seat on disintegrations which would previously have been private. There appeared to be endless appetite for fallen female stories, a whole world waiting for

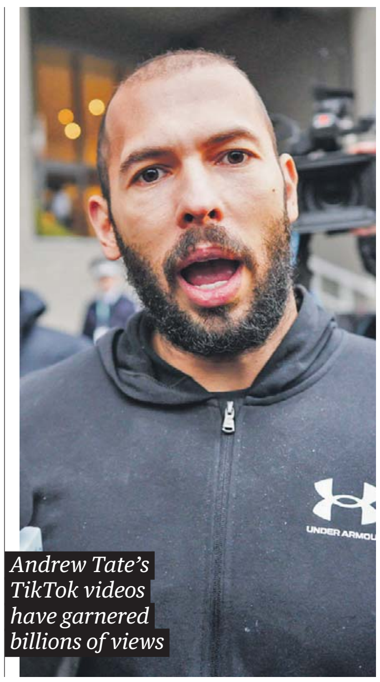


> **Danny Dyer's Zoo column advised a reader to cut his ex's face to stop anyone else wanting her**



Activists from the group No More Page Three

> **Young people now have significantly more extreme misogynist attitudes than older people**



Andrew Tate's TikTok videos have garnered billions of views

Lindsay Lohan or Britney Spears to publicly fail. There was precedent for this in the 90s: Paula Yates, who was persecuted ceaselessly. There was always this rider that she was a charismatic, knowing woman, participating in and even co-creating each scandal (that was the unspoken defence, anyway). By the time the press got to hounding Amy Winehouse, in the depths of her addiction, or Anna Nicole Smith, ridiculed until her death, no such defence was considered necessary.

This new spitefulness was self-perpetuating: the more women were vilified in the press, the more it was used as proof that there was an appetite to read about it. Part of the reason we didn't react more strongly against that was, as Laura Bates says of today: "People collectively have a tendency to believe things are linear and progressive – that things are always getting better on a social justice scale, because the younger generation is naturally more progressive."

Social media contributed to this coarsening in complex ways that weren't easy to discern in real time. As the campaigner Angela Towers remembers, feminist online activism really took off in the early 2010s, with No More Page Three, Bates's Everyday Sexism and other explosions of solidarity and empowerment that culminated in #MeToo. Simultaneously, though, the manosphere and the "incels" at its violent fringe were also exploding. You could kid yourself that things were improving because the platforms of who gets to be heard had been democratised, while, at the same time, that very democratisation had taken the brakes off mainstream tabloids. They didn't have to account for their witch-hunts or upskirting; they could merely report that people were doing it on the internet. And – again, as a hangover from the morally relativistic 90s – none of it claimed to have any moral importance.

Nobody was explicitly saying misogyny was OK. Bates says: "I don't think someone in a predatory position, behaving in an abhorrent way towards young girls, would have looked at the Sun and thought there was nothing wrong with their behaviour, but they would have looked at it and thought: 'I'm going to get away with it.'"

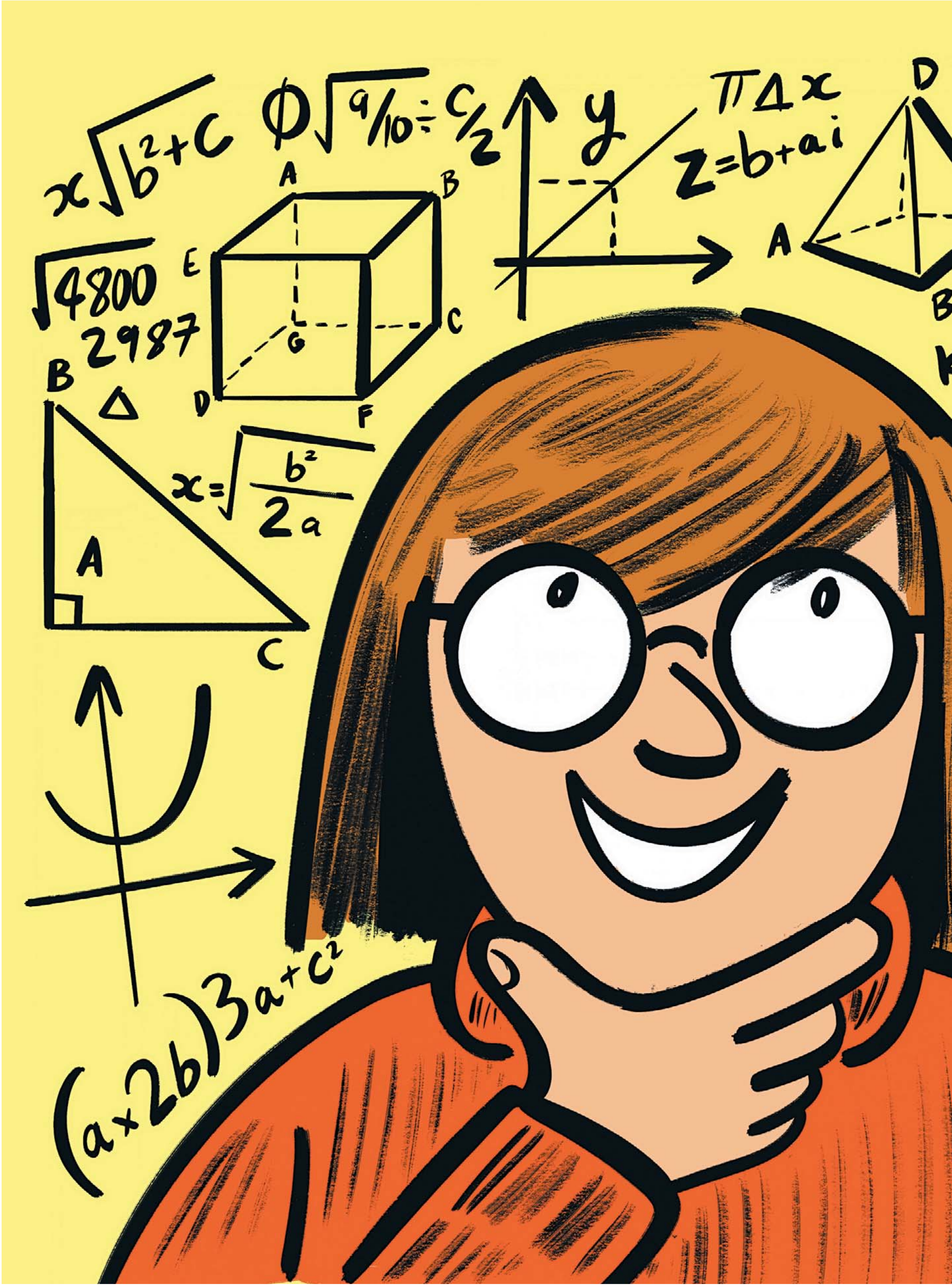
We are still living with that contradiction, where, on the one hand, we think popular culture has evolved in the past 20 years, in so far as there are things from that era – not least Brand's own book, My Booky Wook, which is full of images of misogynist violence that you would hope would never be printed in the mainstream now. On the other hand, we now have figures such as Tate who have extraordinary reach – his videos on TikTok have passed 11.4bn views – without having anything to do with traditional media. "The flooding effect is now doing the same job that irony was doing before," Bates says. "Previously, you got people to engage because it's just jokes. Now, if it's being watched 11.4bn times, it doesn't have to be a joke any more, because the strength is in numbers."

There is a real-world effect. For the first time, in surveys about social attitudes, the "youngest cohort surveyed have significantly more extreme misogynist attitudes than the oldest", Bates says. The illusion of progress has masked an accelerating descent into misogyny. If we look at the 00s and think times have changed for the better, we are just spinning ourselves the same false comfort.

PHOTOGRAPHS: DAN STEINBERG/AP; ALAMY/PA; LONDON NEWS PICTURES/REX

Prime after prime

Who says ageing means slowing down? **Emma Beddington** looks at all the skills we perfect as we hit our 40s, 50s, 60s and beyond



It's easy to fixate on everything you're getting worse at as you age. I'm 48, and trying to remember a phone number long enough to dial it, write under time pressure or sprint after the bus all leave me marvelling - if that's the word - at my evaporating abilities. Muscle and bone mass decline from your 30s, and midlife can feel like a slippery, baffling slope towards decay (yes, I am fun to be around, thank you for noticing). But are there things even someone as ancient as me can still get better at?

The assumption that ageing is inevitably a process of cognitive and physical decline is one Daniel Levitin, a professor of neuroscience at McGill University in Canada, sought to challenge in his book The Changing Mind. "Our societal narrative is not based on science - it's based entirely on prejudice," he tells me. "Contrary to popular myth, we never stop learning or growing new brain connections." Hearing this, I'm reminded that my newfound love of birds has furnished me with a shiny new mental library of calls and feather patterns. I've also managed, with practice, to improve my terrible sight-singing at choir.

"Older adults may slow down and not be able to retrieve memories or respond as quickly as younger adults, but they can be superior in a range of problem-solving skills, particularly those that involve experience and accumulated knowledge," Levitin adds. Experience, determination and focus can compensate for lack of speed and loss of muscle in some physical activities. Olympians are getting older (OK, only two years between 1992 and 2021) and elite athletes seem to stay at the top of their game for longer: take Roger Federer, 42, and Serena Williams, 41, or American footballers Tom Brady, who retired this year at 45, and Peyton Manning, who bowed out just before turning 40.

So could your prime still be ahead of you? In many areas, we just don't know, because there is a lack of quality research. "Lots of things have never been tested in terms of age-related change," one researcher told me. In an ageing society, it feels shortsighted and a missed opportunity not to devote serious resources to exploring what older people do better. But in the meantime, here are some peaks that we do seem to hit in later life.

Your forties

Chess: 40

A study of 125 years of chess matches, which analysed more than 1.6m moves in 24,000 games, found players made the most "optimum" moves at about 40. Performance started to decline from about 45, but not to a statistically significant degree. There is a lot going on in chess - problem-solving, perception, memory - but older players' "training and the accumulation of experience" seem to confer a lasting advantage.

Ultramarathons: 40-49

Over to the merciless world of ultramarathons (anything longer than a standard marathon, often 50km or 100km, and including multi-day races of many hundreds of kilometres). A 2020 study of people who had finished 100km ultramarathons found that women peaked at between 40 and 44, and men at 45 to 49. This isn't a fluke: research confirms that ultrarunners peak far later than other athletes. Even more interestingly, the longer the race - duration or distance - the older the peak performance seems to come.

Dr Beat Knechtle has conducted much of the research on age and ultramarathons; the 59-year-old Swiss GP is also an ultra-athlete himself. It's a lot to do with experience and mindset, he says: "Experience, starting slow, going slow, focusing on the aim … younger athletes always tend to want to achieve a place, a podium, a time. The older ones like me say the first aim is to finish, and finishing means preparing and going to the race knowing it takes, for example, five or 10 or more days." Knechtle has just completed a terrifying-sounding "deca iron", which is 10 triathlons in 10 days; he was the only finisher (the professional triathlete who came second gave up after seven days).

Is there a physiological limit beyond which no amount of tactical advantage will be enough? Knechtle suspects about 70, although he does mention several ultra-winning 70-year-olds, including one who beat him. Older people, he speculates, have free time to focus their energies on training.

Reading a stranger's mood: 40s (and beyond)

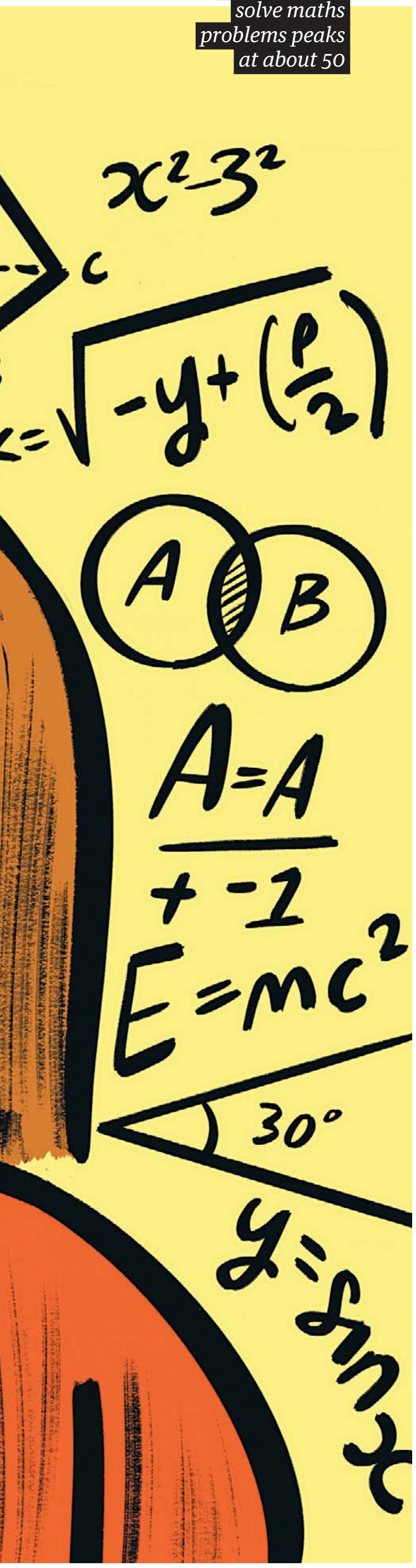
In the "mind in eyes" test, participants look at photographs of strangers' eyes and guess their mood; it's used as a test for emotional intelligence. I tried it myself. The pictures were harder to interpret than I expected (irritated or enraged; curious or flirtatious?) but I went with my gut and scored "better than 89% of participants". That fits with research that found people start achieving the highest scores in their 40s.

Dr Joshua Hartshorne, a professor of psychology at Boston College, Massachusetts, analysed the data as part of a wider study into when various cognitive abilities peak. "What was interesting," he says, "was that people seemed to plateau in their 40s, but you don't see much in the way of decline after that; it doesn't seem to get worse." This has been replicated, Hartshorne says, in other tests of emotional intelligence. We continue to read people well from our 40s right into old age.

Fifties

Arithmetic: 50

In the same investigation, Hartshorne and his co-author, Dr Laura Germine, studied historical IQ testing data for more than 2,000 Americans. The results were more varied than expected. "Historically, it was thought there were roughly two aspects of intelligence," says Hartshorne. "How fast you can



Our ability to solve maths problems peaks at about 50

think and how much you already know." The baseline assumption is that young people think fast and so perform better on tests that require speed, while older people do better on tests of knowledge. "It turns out the world is a lot more complicated than that," he says. "We saw stuff peaking at about 18, as expected; we saw stuff peaking in the middle; and we saw stuff peaking later than expected." One of the later-life peaks – perhaps later than you might imagine – is in arithmetic ability, with test subjects best able to solve arithmetical problems around age 50.

Dressage: 50s
A number of equestrian Olympians are older (Britain's Nick Skelton won show jumping gold at 58 in Rio; Australia's Andrew Hoy won team silver and individual bronze in eventing at Tokyo aged 62), but especially dressage riders. Dressage – horse dancing, to be reductive – might not be the most accessible of sports, but age is no barrier to excellence. Hiroshi Hoketsu competed in the London Olympics at 71 and Australia's Mary Hanna in Tokyo at 66, while Stefan Peters won team silver for the US at 56 at the same games.

The author Jojo Moyes has ridden since childhood; this year, she not only entered her first dressage competition at 54, but won. Training was tough: "I nearly stopped because I thought: I'm just too old and fragile to deal with this," she says. Deciding to view it as "a process" and focus on incremental improvements kept her going. Age brings mental resilience and perspective, she thinks. "You're better able to rationalise. You say: OK, I might fuck up, but it's not a disaster. Also, I think, at this age, we have a lot more willpower to put into training. I understand that nothing comes without effort. I don't have natural ability, so the only thing that's going to work is me putting the hours in. It's been incredibly gratifying to feel I can challenge myself and do it."

Self-esteem: 50-70
Healthy self-esteem is a key component of good mental health, and a long-term data analysis has found it climbs from adolescence onwards, peaking somewhere between 50 and 70. Interestingly, 2020 research from Japan found self-esteem continued to rise from adolescence right into old age, without the drop other studies had found. The researchers speculated this might be because people in Japan have "more humble and balanced attitudes toward themselves, not just in old age", making peaks and steep declines less likely.

Sixties

Winning a Nobel: 61 and 63
Aim high: apart from physics prize winners, who tend to be younger, Nobel recipients are often in their 50s and 60s. The average age of winners is now 44, but 17-year-old Malala Yousafzai and 25-year-old Lawrence Bragg, who won the physics prize in 1915, are significantly skewing that. The ages at which most winners have received the ultimate recognition are 61 and 63 (tied with 33 prizes each). If you stick to literature, you have even longer to hit the big time: in 2018, National Geographic calculated the average age of a Nobel literature prize winner at 65.

Sexual satisfaction and wisdom: 60s – maybe
It would be nice to believe Match.com's 2018 "Singles in America" survey, which polled more than 5,000 single adults, finding the optimal age for sex among single women to be 66 (and 64 for men). But not all investigations have offered such cheering news: a 2020 German longitudinal study found "the older the individual, the less satisfied they were with their sex life" (although 35% of 65- to 80-year-olds were satisfied). In Sweden, however, a study of over-60s found only 24% were dissatisfied with their sex lives.

It's a confusing picture, but another study of more than 6,000 people in the US aged 20 to 93 found "SQoL" – that's sexual quality of life – remains stable as we age. The authors suggest ageing "may be associated with the acquisition of skills and strategies that can buffer age-related declines in SQoL, particularly in the context of a positive relationship". They called this skill set "sexual wisdom", which is a nice concept.

Conflict resolution: 65
In 2010, researchers tried to test for "wisdom" by asking participants to study social conflicts, both at community level (for example, the desire of Kyrgyz people living in Tajikistan to preserve their customs while Tajiks want Kyrgyz people to assimilate fully) and interpersonal, and propose solutions, which were then evaluated blind by experts. "Older participants showed more wisdom than younger … and middle-aged adults," the study concluded, with 64.9 as the average age of the participants in the top 20% of performers.

For Levitin, it's self-evident wisdom increases with age. "Wisdom results from the accumulated set of things we've seen and experienced, our ability to detect patterns in those experiences and our ability to predict future outcomes based on them. The more you've experienced, the more wisdom you're able to tap into."

Vocabulary: 65
Part of Hartshorne's 2015 study on cognitive peaks involved crunching data from 10,000 people trying out tests on a puzzle website. In that, vocabulary scores peaked at 65. That isn't so surprising, according to Hartshorne, whose area of expertise is language: "There are things that really require a lot of time. There's just so much language you have to learn. It doesn't matter how fast you think; there's no way of getting around the fact it takes decades to even come across certain words."



'Reading minds from eyes' becomes easier as you age

> **"At this age, we have more willpower to put into training. I understand that nothing comes without effort**
> **Jojo Moyes**

Interestingly, performance seems to have improved between the IQ data Hartshorne studied from the late 90s (which showed vocabulary starting to shrink from late 40s) and the online test. "The peak in vocabulary is getting later and later," says Hartshorne. That may well be about the changing nature of work and the way society is becoming increasingly text-dependent (most vocabulary is learned through print, not talking, he explains). "We may have been seeing people's vocabulary declining in their late 40s back in the late last century because they didn't do a lot of reading once they were out of school, whereas now, both for work and entertainment, we spend more time with print." All that scrolling might be doing you some good after all.

Being nice: over 60
Research suggests older adults are more emotionally stable and less impulsive; they are better able to maintain positive relationships; and "agreeableness" increases substantially with age. Do we just become nicer? "Not everyone over 60 becomes nicer," says Levitin. "Everyone knows that sourpuss down the street. But generally, yes. There are both structural changes in the brain and neurochemical ones. The amygdala, the brain's fear centre, shrinks with age, causing older adults to become more trusting, compassionate and empathic. Men produce less testosterone, which makes them less aggressive and less disagreeable. And there emerges a positivity bias in memory recall – older adults tend to recall more positive memories and fewer negative ones. They also become more tolerant and accepting – what we call 'grandparent syndrome'. One of the reasons is that, after a certain age, you realise: I've had it pretty good. I've made it this far. I'm grateful."



Many report hitting their sexual peak in their 60s

Seventies

Body confidence: 74 (for women)
In a 2014 poll of 80,000 Americans, satisfaction with body image peaked for women at 74. For men, it came even later, at about 80. A poll from 2014 is hardly definitive evidence, but a literature review in 2015 also found "the importance given to body image as it relates to physical appearance is lower" in western seniors than their younger counterparts.

Eighties

Happiness: 82
"Happiness may seem like a young person thing," says Levitin. "But the surprising thing is when older people are asked to pinpoint the happiest time of their lives, the most common response is not an age in childhood, teens or early adulthood; it's 82." (That emerged from a telephone survey of Americans' wellbeing.)

When you look at everything we can excel at in later life, perhaps that is not so surprising after all.

ILLUSTRATIONS: MARK LONG/THE GUARDIAN



'I feel I can be helpful'… Zelenskiy and Penn in Kyiv

Crisis actors

Sean Penn was in Ukraine making a film about Volodymyr Zelenskiy on the day Russia invaded. Now the Oscar-winner tells **David Smith** how their bromance progressed, and why the president's past as a performer makes him a superlative leader

It is just before 10am and Sean Penn does not want to be here. He made the mistake, he confesses, of sleeping last night with the curtains closed. He slips into acting mode and does a funny impression of a groggy man being jolted awake. Now he craves daylight. So we abandon Off the Record, a basement bar at Washington's venerable Hay-Adams hotel, and head up to a room on the third floor.

The 63-year-old actor settles into an armchair by an open window, sunlight exploring light and shade on his chiselled features.

Penn is in the American capital to promote Superpower, a documentary he co-directed about Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskiy and the resilience of the Ukrainian people following the Russian invasion. After a screening of the film, Nancy Pelosi, former speaker of the House of Representatives, held him in a long embrace as she told him: "Beautiful, beautiful, beautiful."

Not everyone is so gracious about Hollywood actors dabbling in geopolitical affairs. Anyone who was around in the 1980s may remember Penn as the guy who played stoner and surfer Jeff Spicoli in Fast Times at Ridgemont High, spent 33 days in jail for assaulting an extra, and married and divorced Madonna. A profile in Variety magazine opined that in Superpower, "there's a bit too much Sean Penn doing Sean Penn things in a war zone".

Penn anticipates this kind of thing in the film when he parodies an imaginary critic by asking: "Who do you think you are – Walter Cronkite? Do you have a saviour complex?" His answer: "I'm curious … and sometimes I feel I can be helpful."

He has receipts to prove it. Frustrated by the search and rescue efforts in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Penn bought a boat, reached survivors, gave them money and took some of them to hospital. In 2010, after an earthquake left thousands homeless in Haiti, he built a camp, launched a charitable organisation and lived in the country for months at a time.

Today, wearing dark jacket, blue shirt, blue jeans and white trainers, and situated just a three-minute walk from the White House, Penn addresses scepticism of his humanitarian work by reaching for an aphorism: "I dream of a world where chickens can cross the road without having their motives questioned."

Penn did not originally intend to be on camera in Superpower, but then he hit a wall trying to get the film financed. "Docs are pretty hard to get money for now," he says. "It would've been hard to fund unless I was on camera. So you know what? This time I'm just going to let anybody who wants to, to jump in my backpack and see what I see." He made seven trips to Ukraine, and viewers will get to see him conversing with Zelenskiy, walking the deserted streets of Kyiv on the night of the invasion, and leaving his security detail behind as he follows Ukrainian soldiers to trenches evocative of the Somme.

> **We don't love each other in America. We need some of Ukraine's unity**

The twist in the actor-activist's story is that the chief subject of his film is an actor-politician. Superpower neatly curates archival clips of Zelenskiy's past as a comedy star who played a piano with his penis, and in the series Servant of the People played a fictional Ukrainian president. With echoes of Ronald Reagan and Donald Trump, he demonstrated the potency of on-screen charisma when running for election against the political status quo.

It was this aspect that first intrigued Penn, after planned film projects on Syrian president Bashar al-Assad and murdered Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi failed to get off the ground. "On the surface, maybe the world was moving into a big new phase of populism," he says of Zelenskiy. "But that's not what I encountered with him. The Ukraine that one would perceive from the outside was being reinvented by young people and their young president."

Has Zelenskiy's talent as a performer been important to rallying western opinion and winning the communications war with the Kremlin? "I'd say that the performer was helped by a generous heart that wanted to share, which led him to become a performer. The Ukrainians have a really good actor in their palace, and before he was a good actor he was a good



Penn gives Zelenskiy one of his Oscars and gets the Order of Merit in return

PHOTOGRAPHS: ANADOLU AGENCY/GETTY IMAGES; PRESIDENTIAL PRESS SERVICE HANDOUT HANDOUT/EPA; SERGEI SUPINSKY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



'Born for this moment' ... Zelenskiy in Servant of the People

communicator. And he was a good communicator because he saw in people what really existed and what mattered, and saw it through the lens of humour and courage as a man. He has met this challenge as the Ukrainians have met this challenge, in a way that is inspiring to the world. It's important medicine for all of us right now."

Due to delays caused by the pandemic, Penn did not meet Zelenskiy in person until 23 February last year. Filming for Superpower began the following day - the same day Russia launched its invasion. Some Ukrainians interviewed by Penn doubted that Zelenskiy possessed the steeliness necessary to defy Vladimir Putin. But meeting him in the bunker of the presidential palace, Penn found Prince Hal transmogrified into Henry V. "It's as if he was born for this moment. It was very moving. There are certainly great, brave leaders on all the continents today - but not with an enemy next door with nuclear weapons. This is a new paradigm."

Penn's admiration for Zelenskiy - whom he gave one of his Oscars to keep for the duration of the war - is matched only by his disregard for Putin. "I would not react differently to Putin's death by natural means than I would, let's say, if he were stripped naked and burned bit by bit to death by cigarettes and had people defecate on him until he had nothing else to eat. It would be the same. I don't count him among us."

The west's initial response to Putin - wary of provoking him into a conflict that could spiral into a third world war - was incremental. But slowly it has turned up the dial. By July of this year, the US had given more than $75bn in humanitarian, financial and military aid to Ukraine, and indicated that it would allow European allies to provide American-made F-16 fighter aircraft. Penn, who has lobbied for the jets, believes that more decisive action is necessary.

"I use the word cowardice because I do not know any other word to describe what happens when we argue caution as restraint. Restraint looks like John F Kennedy holding back military action during the Cuban missile crisis - that is a powerful piece of leadership. Caution looks like, 'I'm scared the bad guys are going to do something if I do what's right, so let's do nothing. Or let's do just enough that won't get me more scared.'"

He adds: "The good news is that the Ukrainians, both in leadership and on the ground, have not entirely lost faith in us. And while certainly one could get lost in the fact that there have been so many unnecessary deaths - and I believe this war would have been over had decisive action been taken - I don't think it's too late to take decisive action. I'm talking about doing everything it takes to arm them with everything they need to let Russia know that they can play tough, too."

Trump - the front-runner for the Republican party's presidential nomination - and a prominent faction of his party are increasingly questioning support for Ukraine, making it into just one more contentious battleground in America's polarised politics. What Superpower throws into sharp relief, meanwhile, is the sense of unity and national identity that Ukrainians have forged under threat from an external foe.

It made Penn see his own country anew. "It was like breathing a different kind of air. I knew we had problems and divisions, and that the fragile aspiration of America was in great peril. But this was the first time I realised how much we need that unity, that feeling."

He laments: "We don't love each other in this country. We don't like each other in this country. We're nasty to each other. We fear each other, and we're trading courage for cowardice and not realising that, in doing so, we're also trading away something that all of us need, which is that we're social animals and we want community.

"For all the horror of 9/11, something felt good, didn't it? Because we didn't question each other. We knew what we had in common and that bonded us. The Ukrainians, with our help, can start the narrative that we're evolving, and that we don't need disaster to bond."

Penn flies a big US and a big Ukrainian flag at his home in Malibu, California. "I'm a big proponent of the idea that we start waving our flags again, even if we're on the left, and we not worry that our neighbours are going to think we suddenly became a Maga hawk - which is what some of my friends accuse me of."

Ukrainian flags are less visible around the US these days. Attention spans are short and polls show waning support for the war effort. Zelenskiy is heading to Washington this week to test his star power against the fragility of the moment. Before last Thursday's screening, Penn admitted to the audience: "As a film-maker, I would say that one always worries that somehow the projector is going to break. I hope that doesn't happen."

Superpower is available to stream on Paramount+

The Karate Kid

'During the final fight scene, people jumped out of their seats as if their team had won the World Cup. And they were all doing the crane kick outside the cinema'



'It felt like we'd been kissed by magic' ... Ralph Macchio and Pat Morita

PHOTOGRAPH: FLIXPIX/ALAMY

Ralph Macchio
Actor

I was a skinny kid and looked young for my age, which was tough. I got a part in Francis Ford Coppola's The Outsiders playing Johnny Cade. The reviews were positive: I was a young actor feeling good, maybe a little cocky. I got a call about a movie called The Karate Kid and thought: "That's a silly title. Is it a cartoon?" They sent me the script and I met the director, John G Avildsen, at his apartment in New York.

John's hallway was filled with actors vying to play Daniel LaRusso, the film's hero. Everyone was making fun of the title. I immediately became defensive - in hindsight, I was already beginning to own the part. John had a camera on me as soon as I sat down. I was from the suburbs of Long Island and emphasised my New York accent. That attitude fed into Daniel's move from east coast to west coast in the movie. He is new in a town where it seems that everybody has a BMW, cool sunglasses and blond hair - and he wants to defend his roots. There was one big difference between us, though. Daniel has bravado and won't quit. If I got my ass kicked by five karate experts on motorcycles, I would have probably found a different route to school.

There was an effortless ease from the first reading with Pat Morita, who played Mr Miyagi, Daniel's mentor. It felt as if we had been kissed by some soulful magic. Mr Miyagi *is* The Karate Kid. He's a human Yoda, a father figure, the secret sauce that makes the film not just another 1980s coming-of-age movie.

Apart from four jiu-jitsu lessons when I was 10, I had no martial arts experience. Before filming, I was trained in Okinawan Gōjū-ryū karate by Pat E Johnson, who coordinated the fight scenes and played the head referee in the tournament at the end of the film.

I saw the movie for the first time at a sneak preview at the Baronet and Coronet theatre in Manhattan. I can still feel that rush, like being on the back row of a rollercoaster when you're seeing everyone's heads and shoulders move in concert. The love affair between this kid, his mentor and the audience kept building. During the final fight scene, people jumped out of their seats as if their team had won the World Cup or the Super Bowl. When I left the cinema, everyone was doing the crane kick on Third Avenue.

Robert Mark Kamen
Creator

Frank Price, chair of Columbia Pictures, optioned a newspaper article about a nine-year-old boy who had been given a black belt. He called me up and said: "You know about this stuff?" I said I did but that this story was a crock of shit and I had one of my own. I'd started doing karate when I was 17 after getting beaten up. My sensei had been taught by Chōjun Miyagi, who founded the Okinawan Gōjū-ryū karate school.

I didn't want to tell my life story. I wanted to create a film that captured the emotion I felt about karate and my feelings about what made the perfect teacher. Who wouldn't want a mentor who is non-judgmental, loving and can beat the living daylights out of anybody who hurts you? The training routine and principles in the script were all classical Okinawan Gōjū-ryū. They were cinematised, but I knew the blocking system and made-up the "wax on, wax off" and "paint the fence" elements to correspond with the moves.

The director, John, had won an Oscar for Rocky in 1977 but the parallels between the two films never entered my mind - although Sylvester Stallone still swears I ripped him off. The characters were all named after members of my family. Originally, Daniel LaRusso was Daniel Webber, after my nephew who had Jewish heritage. When Ralph showed up, I thought: "This kid looks like a son of Italy if ever there was one." So we changed his surname.

There was immediate chemistry between Pat and Ralph. Pat had been in Happy Days but nothing had given any indication of what he could be. In real life, he had none of Mr Miyagi's wisdom - but when he inhabited the role, he became Mr Miyagi.

Interviews by Ben Gilbert. Ralph Macchio's autobiography, Waxing On: The Karate Kid and Me, is out now. The fifth season of The Karate Kid reboot Cobra Kai is on Netflix



Carry on Cleo ... Amanda Holden in Sex: A Bonkers History

Review Sex: A Bonkers History, Sky History

The relief when the first episode ends is truly indescribable

★☆☆☆☆

Lucy Mangan



When discussing how to make a documentary about the South Seas palatable to the masses, the film producer Hunt Stromberg is reported to have said: "Let's fill the screen with tits."

Those were the days, my friend, and they went on long enough for women in particular to think they would never end. But times change – and breast coverage changes, too. The desperation of commissioners to find a seemingly legitimate way to get women's bodies on screen in this increasingly dreadful era of wokeness is becoming palpable. I feel so sorry for them.

But I feel sorrier for us, because we have reached the point where Sex: A Bonkers History, presented by Amanda Holden and Dan Jones, is happening. I have never been so grateful for a programme maker providing only one episode for review. I would not have made it through a second. I would have cringed myself inside out.

There are five episodes in total (I issue this as a warning). It begins with the ancient Greeks, Egyptians and Romans, with an almost insultingly quick look at India's Kama Sutra on the way. Jones is there to tell us the proper, manly facts. Holden is there to decorate the place (this is not my take – those are their stated roles). "You're the one who knows stuff," says Holden as they stand in a studio together. "What do I do?"

The next segment shows Holden clad in a Spartan running dress at Crystal Palace sports ground in south London to demonstrate female fitness levels in the ancient city state. It is bathetic and pathetic in equal measure. In voiceover, Jones explains the militarism of the Spartans and that boys were sent to live in barracks at seven before entering, at 10, "what we would consider paedophilic relationships" with adult male mentors. Then back to Holden running in her little dress.

For the Kama Sutra section, Holden conducts a whistlestop interview with Dr Sonia Wigh, a historian of early-modern south Asia. She gets to translate the title (Kama: sex, sensuality, eroticism; Sutra: story) before Holden bounds off to talk to a tantric yoga expert while a clothed couple demonstrate tantric foreplay, which is incredibly intimate and therefore extremely boring televisually.

On to Egypt. "Cleopatra was the first sex symbol," but also "so good at maths she could probably have got a job on Countdown!" Jones makes a love potion as he talks about pre-Christianity's lack of taboos around sex and participates in a laboured joke involving a carrot and cucumber. He also makes an ancient Egyptian spermicide, which they apply to pig semen under a microscope to see how effective it is. The sperm stop swimming. "It works!" says Jones. There is every chance they simply died of embarrassment.

Before we all do likewise, there is just time for a granular study of the sexual mores of ancient Rome. "Gladiators were the pin-ups of the ancient world!" trills Holden. The empress Messalina was "the first woman in history to be slut-shamed!" But, Jones notes sternly, the stories about her indefatigable appetites and infidelities could well have been put about by her and her husband's enemies to discredit her, since history is written largely by men and, hmm, patriarchy, ahh, victors, yes, power structures. "They used a woman's sexuality to strip her of her power," says a po-faced Holden. "Much like today."

The important thing is that Messalina's story is great uncovered-breasts cover, via reconstructions of a competition she supposedly had with a brothel employee to see who could satisfy more men in an evening. She won (25 to 24, which raises more questions about Roman lubricants than I ever had about Egyptian spermicides), but by this point in the programme we have all lost.

After a quick section on gladiators' "cock rings" (designed to prevent sex and quite horrible), an art show of Pompeiian phalluses and a Blind Date riff that is worse than Blind Date, it is all over. The relief is indescribable. Whatever anyone was paid for their involvement in this tragic effort was too much and not enough. Please, if you want to fill the screen with "tits", just do that. Dressing it up as anything else diminishes everyone so much more.

What's On

Scan the QR code below to sign up for the What's On newsletter, our free TV email with the best reviews, news and exclusive writing direct to your inbox every Monday

Secrets of Our Universe With Tim Peake
9pm, Channel 5



Tim Peake is a very nice man who knows a lot about space, which makes him a great choice of host for this very nice documentary series about space. Could there be life beyond Earth? That is the ultimate question here, starting with a tour of the Milky Way via a hot-air balloon ride over York, and Tim's reflections on his time as an astronaut (he saw 16 sunrises every day when he was on the International Space Station).
Hollie Richardson

Living Next Door to Putin
8pm, BBC One
Katya Adler continues her journey along Russia's border, meeting the people who are fighting back against this new-old threat. She joins Nato troops in Estonia; in Finland, the scars of past wars with Russia are detectable in bunkers beneath Helsinki; and, in Norway, nuclear scientists and reindeer herders have cause for concern.
Ellen E Jones

The Truth About the 'Skinny' Jab
8pm, Channel 4
Drugs such as Ozempic – originally developed to treat type 2 diabetes – have faced sceptical headlines in recent months due to their rise in popularity as weight-loss methods. In this documentary, Anna Richardson uncovers the myths and facts behind what has been called the new "magic bullet" in the fight against obesity. **HR**

The Following Events Are Based on a Pack of Lies
9pm, BBC One
The surreal and addictive scammer drama continues – and things are getting very murky. After the party, Alice struggles to overcome Rob's gaslighting abuse, while Cheryl finally starts to question what is happening – but is he just going to get away with it all again? **HR**

Rise of the Nazis: The Manhunt
9pm, BBC Two
This new history series neatly weaves together reconstructions and interviews with experts to give a rich snapshot of the end of the second world war. It's a harrowing moment as British troops discover the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, and with high-ranking Nazis still at large, the allied soldiers know they must track them down.
Hannah Verdier

Storyville: Winning Hearts and Minds
10pm, BBC Four
A grim but absorbing documentary about two Danish film-makers – one a former soldier – who return to Helmand to interview an overtly chummy Afghan police chief. But they are also discreetly gathering testimony about how he may have facilitated the abuse of young boys while working alongside Nato. Will their true aims be uncovered?
Graeme Virtue

BBC One

6.0 **Breakfast** (T) **9.15** Morning Live (T) **10.0** Fraud Squad (T) **10.45** Claimed and Shamed (T) **11.15** Homes Under the Hammer (T) **12.15** Bargain Hunt (T) (R) **1.0** News (T) **1.30** Regional News and Weather (T) **1.45** Doctors (T) **2.15** Money for Nothing (T) (R) **3.0** Escape to the Country (T) **3.45** Garden Rescue (T) **4.30** The Finish Line (T) **5.15** Pointless (T) (R) **6.0** News (T) **6.30** Regional News and Weather (T) **7.0** The One Show (T) **7.30** EastEnders (T)

8.0 **Living Next Door to Putin** (T) Part two of two. Katya Adler travels from Estonia to Scandinavia.
9.0 **The Following Events Are Based on a Pack of Lies** (T) Cheryl tries to stop her scholarship suffering a huge loss and when Alice thinks she will get justice, she finds the system is rigged.

10.0 **News** (T)
10.30 **Regional News** (T) Weather
10.40 **Juice** (T) (R) Jamma sneakily uses his brother for market research at work.
11.10 **Juice** (T) (R) Jamma plays therapist to his parents.
11.30 **Boot Dreams: Now Or Never** (T) (R) Jordan gets a trial.
12.30 **Weather for the Week Ahead** (T) **12.35** News (T)

BBC Two

6.20 **Bargain Hunt** (T) (R) **7.05** Garden Rescue (T) (R) **7.50** Sign Zone: Expert Witness (T) (R) **8.20** Weekend Escapes (T) (R) **8.50** Lifeline (T) (R) **9.0** Nicky Campbell (T) **10.0** News (T) **12.15** Politics Live (T) **1.0** The Super League Show (T) (R) **2.0** Impossible (T) (R) **2.45** Beechgrove Repotted (T) (R) **3.0** Big Farming Adventure (T) (R) **3.30** Great Canadian Railway Journeys (T) **4.0** Serengeti (T) (R) **5.0** Flog It! (T) (R) **6.0** House of Games (T) (R) **6.30** Tales from a Kitchen Garden (T) **7.0** Coastal Defenders (T)

8.0 **This Farming Life** (T) (R) The Barclay family prepare their sheep for the Lanark winter show, and Nikki and Ollie try their hand at farming rabbits.
9.0 **Rise of the Nazis: The Manhunt** (T) New series. Documentary about the hunt for the highest-ranking Nazis in the immediate aftermath of the second world war.

10.0 **Henpocalypse!** (T) The women get an ultimatum. Last in the series.
10.30 **Newsnight** (T) Weather
11.15 FILM **An Education** (Lone Scherfig, 2009) (T) Drama.
12.50 **Sign Zone** Money for Nothing (T) (R) **1.35** Garden Rescue (T) (R) **2.20** Claimed and Shamed (T) (R) **3.05** This Is BBC Two (T)

ITV1

6.0 **Good Morning Britain** (T) **9.0** Lorraine (T) **10.0** This Morning (T) **12.30** Loose Women (T) **1.30** News and Weather (T) **1.55** Local News and Weather (T) **2.0** James Martin's Spanish Adventure (T) **3.0** Tenable (T) **4.0** Tipping Point (T) **5.0** The Chase (T) **6.0** Local News and Weather (T) **6.30** News and Weather (T) **7.30** Emmerdale (T)

8.0 **Love Your Garden** (T) The team transform a garden in the Oxfordshire town of Bicester for local community heroes Adam and Alice and their two children.
9.0 **My Mum, Your Dad** (T) The children are thrilled when sparks fly between two parents they choose to go on a date.

10.0 **News** (T) Weather
10.30 **Local News** (T) Weather
10.45 FILM **The Rock** (Michael Bay, 1996) (T) Action thriller, starring Nicolas Cage.
1.0 **My Mum, Your Dad** (T) (R) **1.50** The Chase (T) (R) **2.40** Loose Women (T) (R) **3.30** Tenable (T) (R) **4.20** Unwind With ITV (T) **5.05** Spanish Adventure (T) (R)

Channel 4

6.05 **Countdown** (T) (R) **6.45** Cheers (T) (R) **7.35** Everybody Loves Raymond (T) (R) **8.25** Frasier (T) (R) **9.55** Chateau DIY (T) (R) **10.55** George Clarke's Amazing Spaces (T) (R) **11.55** News (T) **12.0** Steph's Packed Lunch (T) **2.10** Countdown (T) **3.0** A Place in the Sun (T) (R) **5.0** A New Life in the Sun (T) (R) **6.0** The Simpsons (T) (R) **6.30** Hollyoaks (T) (R) **7.0** News (T)

8.0 **The Truth About the 'Skinny' Jab** (T) Anna Richardson investigates modern weight-loss drugs.
9.0 **999: On the Front Line** (T) (R) Paramedics are called to a man with chest pains, who is in so much discomfort he can hardly speak, while a woman with liver disease has fallen over and ripped her ear.

10.0 **Selling Super Houses** (T)
11.05 **Gogglebox** (T) (R)
12.10 **24 Hours to Hell and Back** (T) (R) **12.55** Couples Come Dine With Me (T) (R) **1.50** Alone: The Final (T) (R) **2.45** Screw (T) (R) **3.40** Undercover Boss USA (T) (R) **4.30** Location, Location, Location (T) (R) **5.25** Beat the Chef (T) **5.50** Jamie's Comfort Food (T) (R)

Channel 5

6.0 **Milkshake!** **9.15** Jeremy Vine (T) **11.15** Storm Huntley (T) **12.40** Alexis Conran (T) **1.40** News (T) **1.45** Home and Away (T) (R) **2.15** FILM Fatal Mind Games (2022) (T) **4.0** Bargain-Loving Brits in the Sun (T) **5.0** News (T) **6.0** Susan Calman's Grand Day Out (T) (R) **7.0** GPs: Behind Closed Doors (T)

8.0 **The Yorkshire Vet** (T) Peter battles to save a ewe and her unborn triplets, and David visits a calf with an infected navel.
9.0 **Secrets of Our Universe With Tim Peake** (T) New series. The astronaut explores our universe, from planets, stars and black holes to space missions.

10.0 **Soham: Evil in a Small Town** (T) Documentary examining the 2002 deaths of 10-year-old girls Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman.
1.15 **Live Casino Show** (T) **3.15** Stalked: Murder in Slow Motion (T) (R) **4.05** OMG: Make Me a Famous Face (T) (R) **4.50** Nick's Quest (T) (R) **5.15** House Doctor (T) (R)

BBC Four

7.0 **Great Coastal Railway Journeys** (T) (R) Michael Portillo travels to Port Talbot. **7.30** Wonders of the Great Barrier Reef With Iolo Williams (T) (R)

8.30 **Some Mothers Do 'Ave 'Em** (T) (R) Frank plans a trip to the seaside in their new car.
9.0 **Yes Minister** (T) (R) A departmental construction project gets under way, but Jim has to do a union deal.
9.30 **The Thick of It** (T) (R) Nicola desperately tries to find a sports star to front a campaign.

10.0 **Storyville: Winning Hearts and Minds** (T) Allegations of abuse against the Afghan police force in Helmand.
11.15 **Invasion! With Sam Willis** (T)
12.15 **Parkinson Meets Paul McCartney** (T) (R) **1.20** Great Coastal Railway Journeys (T) (R) **1.50** Wonders of the Great Barrier Reef (T) (R) **2.50** Faith Ringgold (T) (R)

Other channels

BBC Three
7.0pm Frozen Planet **8.0** Top Gear America **8.35** Ghosts US **8.55** The Catch Up **9.0** Ballers: Ball Or Nothing **9.30** Ballers: Ball Or Nothing **10.0** FILM A Million Little Pieces (2018) **11.45** The Bold Type **12.25** Ballers: Ball Or Nothing **12.55** Ballers: Ball Or Nothing **1.25** Boot Dreams: Now Or Never **2.30** Dubai Hustle **2.55** Juice **3.25** Juice

Dave
6.0am Teleshopping **7.10** Yianni: Supercar Customiser **7.35** Yianni: Supercar Customiser **8.0** Top Gear **9.0** DIY SOS: The Big Build **10.0** Railroad Australia **11.0** Rick Stein's Road to Mexico **12.0** Celebrity Storage Hunters **1.0** Sin City Motors **2.0** Top Gear **3.0** Top Gear **4.0** Australian Ninja Warrior **5.30** Gino's Italian Escape **6.0** Rick Stein's Long Weekends **7.0** Richard Osman's House of Games **7.40** Richard Osman's House of Games **8.20** Would I Lie to You? **9.0** QI XL **10.0** Have I Got a Bit More Old News for You **11.0** Have I Got a Bit More Old News for You **12.0** Mock the Week: Election Special **12.40** Would I Lie to You? **1.20** Alan Davies: As Yet Untitled **2.25** Richard Osman's House of Games **2.55** Richard Osman's House of Games **3.30** This Country **4.0** Teleshopping

E4
6.0am Hollyoaks **7.0** Married at First Sight UK **8.30** Melissa & Joey **9.0** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **10.0** The Big Bang Theory **11.0** Modern Family **12.0** The Big Bang Theory **12.30** The Big Bang Theory **1.0** The Big Bang Theory **1.30** The Big Bang Theory **2.0** The Goldbergs **2.30** The Goldbergs **3.0** Modern Family **3.30** Modern Family **4.0** Married at First Sight UK **5.30** The Big Bang Theory **6.0** The Big Bang Theory **6.30** The Big Bang Theory **7.0** Hollyoaks **7.30** Young Sheldon **8.0** First Dates Ireland **9.0** Married at First Sight UK **10.10** Abbott Elementary **10.40** Abbott Elementary **11.10** Naked Attraction **12.10** Gogglebox **1.15** Married at First Sight UK **2.20** Abbott Elementary **2.50** Abbott Elementary **3.15** The Big Bang Theory **3.40** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **4.25** The Goldbergs **4.45** The Goldbergs **5.10** Black-ish **5.30** Black-ish

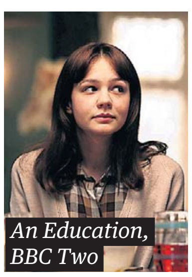
Film4
11.0am FILM Red Mountain (1951) **12.45** FILM The Tall T (1957) **2.25** FILM The Duel at Silver Creek (1952) **4.0** FILM Tobruk (1967) **6.15** FILM K-19: The Widowmaker (2002) **9.0** FILM The Predator (2018) **11.10** FILM Minari (2020) **1.25** FILM Wild Nights With Emily (2018)

ITV2
6.0am CITV **9.0** One Tree Hill **10.0** Dawson's Creek **11.0** Love Bites **12.0** Dinner Date **1.0** Family Fortunes **2.0** Chuck **3.05** One Tree Hill **4.0** Dawson's Creek **5.0** Dinner Date **6.0** Celebrity Catchphrase **7.0** Family Fortunes **8.0** Superstore **8.30** Superstore **9.0** Gordon, Gino and Fred: American Road Trip **10.0** FILM Plebs: Soldiers of Rome (2022) **11.55** Family Guy **12.20** Family Guy **12.45** American Dad! **1.15** American Dad! **1.40** Superstore **2.05** Superstore **2.30** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records **3.0** Teleshopping **5.0** The Epic Tales of Captain Underpants **5.25** Scooby-Doo! Mystery Incorporated **5.45** Craig of the Creek

Sky Max
6.0am Supergirl **7.0** DC's Legends of Tomorrow **8.0** The Flash **9.0** Stargate Atlantis **11.0** Supergirl **12.0** The Flash **1.0** NCIS: Los Angeles **3.0** Hawaii Five-0 **4.0** S.W.A.T **5.0** DC's Legends of Tomorrow **6.0** Stargate SG-1 **8.0** A League of Their Own Road Trip: Loch Ness to London **9.0** A Discovery of Witches **10.0** FILM Saw (2004) **12.0** The Blacklist **1.0** Road Wars **2.0** Never Mind the Buzzcocks **2.45** Road Wars **3.10** Hawaii Five-0 **4.05** S.W.A.T **5.0** Highway Patrol

Sky Arts
6.0am Giselle **8.0** The Joy of Painting **9.0** Tales of the Unexpected **10.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **11.0** Discovering: Jon Voight **12.0** The Joy of Painting **1.0** Tales of the Unexpected **2.0** The Danish Collector: Delacroix to Gauguin **3.0** The Art of Architecture Special: Qatar **4.0** Discovering: Dustin Hoffman **5.0** Tales of the Unexpected **6.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **6.30** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **7.0** The Joy of Painting **8.0** The Story of British Cinema: The Pioneer Years **9.30** Comedy Legends **10.30** Diana Ross & the Supremes: Music Icons **11.0** Discovering: Leonardo DiCaprio **12.0** Soundtracks: Songs That Defined History **1.0** Cartoon Carnival **2.45** Hopper: An American Love Story **4.0** Renoir: Revered and Reviled **5.0** Inside Art Special: Coventry City of Culture

Sky Atlantic
6.0am Richard E Grant's Hotel Secrets **7.55** The Leftovers **10.20** Ray Donovan **12.25** Game of Thrones **1.25** Raised By Wolves **3.25** Six Feet Under **5.40** Ray Donovan **7.50** Game of Thrones **9.0** The Lovers **9.40** Billions **10.45** Tin Star **11.50** Billions **1.0** Das Boot **2.0** Domina **3.05** Domina **4.15** Richard E Grant's Hotel Secrets


An Education, BBC Two

Radio

Radio 3
6.30am Breakfast **9.0** Essential Classics **12.0** Composer of the Week: Girolamo Frescobaldi (2/5) **1.0** Lunchtime Concert. Performances from the NI Opera Festival of Voice 2023, featuring tenor Robin Tritschler, baritone James Atkinson and mezzo-soprano Marta Fontanals-Simmons with pianist Simon Lepper. **2.0** Afternoon Concert. The Ulster Orchestra perform Vaughan Williams's Fifth Symphony, and Rachel Podger is the soloist in Mozart's First Violin Concerto with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales. **5.0** In Tune **7.0** Classical Mixtape **7.30** In Concert. At the Salzburg festival, Riccardo Muti conducts the Vienna Philharmonic and Vienna State Opera Chorus Concert Association in Verdi's Stabat Mater and Te Deum from Quattro Pezzi Sacri, and Bruckner's Symphony No 7 in E. **10.0** Free Thinking. Cambridge's role in the transatlantic slave trade. **10.45** The Essay: Unearthing Britannia's Tribes. Playwright David Greig on the Maeatae. (R) **11.0** Night Tracks **12.30** Through the Night

Radio 4
6.0am Today **8.31** (LW) Yesterday in Parliament **9.0** The Life Scientific With Alexandre Antonelli, director of science at Kew Gardens. (7/7) **9.30** One to One. Nikki Bedi explores her love of The Real Housewives reality series. (7/7) **9.45** (LW) Daily Service **9.45** (FM) Book of the Week: Material World (2/5) **10.0** Woman's Hour **11.0** The Archbishop Interviews: Gabriel Byrne. (R) **11.30** Three Faces of WH Auden (2/3) **12.0** News **12.01** (LW) Shipping Forecast **12.04** Call You and Yours **12.57** Weather **1.0** The World at One **1.45** NatureBang. The underwater world of killer whales. (2/5) **2.0** The Archers (R) **2.15** This Thing of Darkness. Drama, by Lucia Haynes and Anita Vettesse. (6/7) (R) **3.0** Short Cuts. Josie Long presents adventures in sound. (1/9) **3.30** Bacteria: The Tiny Giants (R) **4.0** Crossing the Cuillin Mountains. Robert Macfarlane walks the Cuillin Ridge on Skye. (1/2) **4.30** Great Lives. Chi-chi Nwanoku picks the singer Jessye Norman. (8/9) **5.0** PM **5.54** (LW) Shipping Forecast **6.0** News **6.30** Suggs: Love Letters to London (R) **7.0** The Archers **7.15** Front Row **8.0** The Great Replacement. Raffaello Pantucci investigates the far-right theory. **8.40** In Touch **9.0** Inside Health (1/6) **9.30** The Life Scientific (R) **10.0** The World Tonight **10.45** Book at Bedtime: The Secret Hours (2/10) **11.0** Call Jonathan Pie. Pie is trolled by a talk-radio legend. (5/10) **11.30** Today in Parliament **12.0** News **12.30** Book of the Week (R) **12.48** Shipping Forecast **1.0** As World Service **5.20** Shipping Forecast **5.30** News **5.43** Prayer for the Day **5.45** Farming Today **5.58** Tweet of the Day (R)

Radio 4 Extra
6.0am The Three Musketeers (6/6) **6.30** Death Speaks Another Language (3/6) **7.0** How to Find Home (2/10) **7.15** Hester (2/5) **7.30** Showstopper (2/6) **8.0** The Goon Show (11/17) **8.30** Little Blighty on the Down (5/5) **9.0** The Motion Show (2/6) **9.30** On Baby Street (1/5) **10.0** Indiana (2/2) **11.0** The Three Musketeers (6/6) **11.30** Death Speaks Another Language (3/6) **12.0** How to Find Home (2/10) **12.15** Hester (2/5) **12.30** Showstopper (2/6) **1.0** The Goon Show (11/17) **1.30** Little Blighty on the Down (5/5) **2.0** The Motion Show (2/6) **2.30** On Baby Street (1/5) **3.0** Indiana (2/2) **4.0** The Three Musketeers (6/6) **4.30** Death Speaks Another Language (3/6) **5.0** How to Find Home (2/10) **5.15** Hester (2/5) **5.30** Showstopper (2/6) **6.0** The Goon Show (11/17) **6.30** Little Blighty on the Down (5/5) **7.0** The Motion Show (2/6) **7.30** On Baby Street (1/5) **8.0** TED Radio Hour **8.50** Inheritance Tracks **9.0** Mastertapes (8/12) **9.30** The Long Drop (2/10) **9.45** The Dead Hour (2/10) **10.0** Suggs: Love Letters to London (2/4) **10.30** Cliche **11.0** Meet David Sedaris (4/6) **11.30** Think the Unthinkable (6/6) **12.0** Indiana (2/2) **1.0** The Three Musketeers (6/6) **1.30** Death Speaks Another Language (3/6) **2.0** How to Find Home (2/10) **2.15** Hester (2/5) **2.30** Showstopper (2/6) **3.0** The Goon Show (11/17) **3.30** Little Blighty on the Down (5/5) **4.0** The Motion Show (2/6) **4.30** On Baby Street (1/5) **5.0** Westwood (1/2)

Puzzles

Yesterday's solutions

Wordsearch

L	G	M	F	P	O	S	T	G
V	O	Z	Q	E	O	H	S	L
A	I	O	A	R	P	I	A	O
R	E	T	T	A	H	C	H	V
S	C	R	O	O	O	C	I	E
S	N	S	R	Y	N	A	T	U
E	R	S	Q	U	E	E	Z	E
N	E	O	L	W	R	N	F	I
T	A	L	Y	G	I	U	O	N
I	M	T	P	A	S	N	C	M
W	R	A	I	E	L	N	E	E

Solution no 16,651



Sudoku no 6,207

2	3	1	9	7	4	5	8	6
8	5	9	1	6	2	7	3	4
4	7	6	5	3	8	9	2	1
1	8	2	4	9	6	3	7	5
3	9	7	8	1	5	4	6	2
6	4	5	3	2	7	1	9	8
5	1	3	6	8	9	2	4	7
9	2	8	7	4	1	6	5	3
7	6	4	2	5	3	8	1	9

Word wheel

ENERGETIC

Suguru

1	4	5	4	1	2
5	3	1	3	5	3
1	2	5	2	1	4
5	4	1	3	5	2
2	3	2	4	1	4
1	4	1	3	2	3

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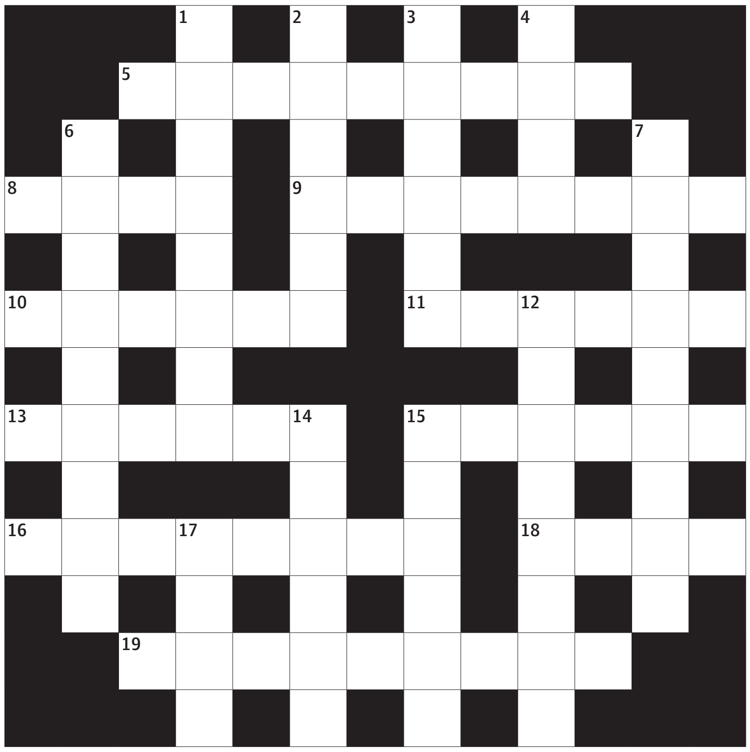
Quick crossword no 16,652

Across

5 Reason to make a complaint (9)
8 Setter's utterance? (4)
9 Tyrannical (8)
10 Winter sport (6)
11 Reject (6)
13 Braids (6)
15 Affectionate (6)
16 Rodgers and Hammerstein musical (8)
18 Pay attention to (4)
19 Odds and ends (4-1-4)

Down

1 The writing on the wall? (8)
2 Experienced sailor (3,3)
3 German emperor (6)
4 Parrot (4)
6 Spitting image (9)
7 California dry red wine (9)
12 Annual reason to celebrate (8)
14 Kiss and cuddle (6)
15 Annoyed and irritable (6)
17 Insouciant (4)



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Sudoku no 6,208

Medium. Fill the grid so that each row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9. Printable version at theguardian.com/sudoku

		3				2		
8		7		5		6		4
		5	3		6	9		
		9	2	4	7	5		
4			5		8			3
			4		9			
6			1		2			9
		4				7		

Suguru

Fill the grid so that each square in an outlined block contains a digit. A block of two squares contains the digits 1 and 2, a block of three squares contains the digits 1, 2 and 3, and so on. No same digit appears in neighbouring squares, not even diagonally.

2		1	4	2	
3				5	
				3	

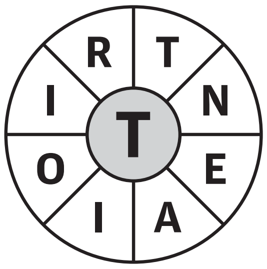
Wordsearch

Can you find 15 "pan" words in the grid? Words can run forwards, backwards, vertically or diagonally, but always in a straight, unbroken line.

S	P	A	N	I	E	L	I	H
U	G	Y	N	A	P	M	O	C
K	J	A	P	A	N	S	D	J
E	K	A	C	N	A	P	U	R
R	P	A	N	E	L	A	S	Y
E	R	A	M	P	A	N	T	L
H	A	P	N	M	P	G	P	P
T	I	D	A	A	R	L	A	O
N	I	N	N	C	Y	N	N	N
A	A	T	E	A	S	E	O	A
P	O	T	E	D	P	Y	A	P

Word wheel

Find as many words as possible using the letters in the wheel. Each must use the central letter and at least two others. Letters may be used only once. You may not use plurals, foreign words or proper nouns. There is at least one nine-letter word to be found. TARGET: Excellent-75. Good-62. Average-46.



Trivia corner

Who was the first actor to win an Oscar in a non-English language film?
a. Marcello Mastroianni
b. Sophia Loren
c. Anna Magnani
d. Robert DeNiro
Answer top right



TODAY'S TRIVIA CORNER ANSWER **SOPHIA LOREN, FOR TWO WOMEN (1961)**